Commentary

Volume Seventy, Number Six, December 1980

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In Defense of Capitalists

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Books: Joseph Shattan/George L. Mosse/Edward Jay Epstein/Elliott Abrams/Lev Navrozov

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Commentary

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[2]Social Security was never *intended* to be more than a basic system supplemented by private pensions and individual savings. The price for forgetting this has been high and promises to get higher: combined employer/employee FICA taxes on our grandchildren's salaries could reach 25%. Of course, there are alternatives. Social Security could increase the official retirement age, pay benefits based on government-determined need, or simply *... reduce benefits in general!*

[3]Two-thirds of small businesses surveyed in 1978 offered no pension plans at all. One reason: Typically, big employers can write off 46¢ in taxes for every pension dollar they contribute, while most small ones can only write off about 20¢. In some cases, they can't write off anything.

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Letters from Readers

"The Boys on the Beach"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's "The Boys on the Beach" [September] is powerful and chilling, Dantesque at times in its evocation of successive depths of hell. I have no doubt that a great deal of the response to it, whether organized or not, will set new records of vituperation. So be it. Militant homosexuality has become one of the most destructive of ideological influences on the family in our society. If you would destroy an institution, first make ridiculous or repugnant its central roles. The self-serving, proselytizing voices of Gay Liberationists ally themselves naturally with the same voices from radical Women's Liberationism; the single objective is the devastation—through contempt, ridicule, and derision—of the family. Midge Decter has in this brilliant and courageous article added memorably to her equally brilliant and courageous analyses of militant Women's Liberationism. We are in her debt.

ROBERT NISBET
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ever since my salad days in the Greenwich Village of the 20's, I have been both fascinated and troubled by the homosexual phenomenon, which has undergone such profound changes in my lifetime. Perhaps that is why Midge Decter's "The Boys on the Beach" rang such a loud bell in my mind and memory and why her article, unfettered by the impedimenta of dubious theories, is far and away the best impressionistic writing on that dismal subject. It is not a social, psychological, or political tract. It is just the simple unvarnished truth as reflected in the mirror of the author's life experience—and mine.

ELIAS M. SCHWARZBART
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's "The Boys on the Beach" is the most brilliant description I have read of a male homosexual way of life as exemplified by the community she describes—and reflected in the perplexed reaction of outsiders. There is, of course, a whole range of homosexual styles and personalities, narrower, perhaps, than the heterosexual range, but going beyond that of Fire Island Pines, as Miss Decter certainly would recognize. Some homosexuals even manage to have stable and reasonably satisfactory relationships. Many are neither young nor middle class. Yet a convincing description such as Miss Decter's persuades me once more that homosexuality, though not demonstrably a disease, is a developmental defect, minor and well-managed in some cases, crippling in others.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter, in her excellent essay, observes: "Gay Lib has been an effort to . . . define homosexuality as nothing more than a casual option among options. In accepting the movement's terms, heterosexuals have only raised to a nearly intolerable height the costs of the homosexual's flight from normality." Miss Decter's observation motivates one to ask: is homosexuality normal or abnormal, natural or unnatural?

The facts of biology, it seems to me, buttress the contention that heterosexuality is prescriptively natural and normal and that homosexuality is prescriptively unnatural and abnormal. For example: male and female sex organs complement each other; the bodies of a man and a woman seem designed for union with one another. To be sure, it would be a mistake to argue from biological fact to "what ought to be," that is, from "is" to "ought"; but certainly, the facts of biology lend much credence to the view that heterosexuality—and not homosexuality—is natural and normal (both descriptively and prescriptively).

Those who argue that homosexuality is natural and normal have been, and continue to be, deluded by the false perception that "what is" is the same thing as "what ought to be." They mistakenly identify the normal and natural with what is popular, socially accepted, and common practice; they fail to distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive normality, between (what Emerson termed) the "law for man" and the "law for thing." . . .

As theologian Ruth Barnhouse points out in *Homosexuality: A*

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Symbolic Confusion: ". . . the words *natural* and *unnatural* have undergone a subtle but important change of meaning since the time of their original use. We now understand the words to be saying something about whether or not such acts are being performed with any regularity by people who are not noticeably deranged."

Formerly, the terms "natural" and "unnatural," "normal" and "abnormal," were used quite differently, and far more accurately. As Dr. Barnhouse explains, the term "nature" previously was used to refer to "the *nature* of man as a being endowed with reason and free will and therefore equipped to make free choices. Acts which were the result of wrong choice, either through ignorance or sin, were considered unnatural in that they were not intended to occur." Previously, then, the "natural" was equated with or derived from the "good." Now, however, what we have done, contends Dr. Barnhouse, "is to reverse the order in which these terms are considered. Formerly one began with a concept of good and deduced from that." Today, though, "the natural is first, arrived at by what actually occurs, and the conclusion drawn is: what exists—provided it involves no physical harm to anyone—defines what is good." . . .

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW
Arlington Heights, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's exploration of the link between the evolving homosexual aesthetic and the progress of Gay Liberation is absorbing. From the Pines in the 60's to the underbelly of Lower West Side Manhattan in the 80's, is indeed a long journey, and I share her perplexity and her questioning of whether any progress has really occurred.

The most significant error in Miss Decter's assumption is that the homosexuals she knew on Fire Island were representative of the homosexual population. The people she described are better termed homoerotic than homosexual. Camp humor, style, and above all the endless lust for youth are related to sexual preference but are more intimately connected to other needs. One may as well evaluate heterosexuality in terms of Eighth Avenue as homosexuality in terms of Christopher Street.

Homosexuals are drawn to the "soft, marginal businesses," as the article suggests, but I do not believe they are in any way underrepresented in the professions. Sexual preference simply has no bearing on the professional standards of doctors, professors, and stockbrokers; thus the lack of visible homosexual presence in these professions. Society asks only discretion, and most homosexuals deliver this without difficulty.

Where Gay Liberation is most needed it is not found: it is largely a white, urban, upscale phenomenon. The pain of being a working-class homosexual in a rural area has not been significantly alleviated by Gay Liberation. Political solutions to sexual problems are a sham.

"In the leather bar both the brutalized and the brutalizer announce a common and mutual loathing of the flesh and especially of the self, the spirit, that moves it." Miss Decter, understandably, reserves some special loathing for the Cherry Grove-kinky style of homosexuality. Yet I think the loathing of the flesh there is at root little different from the adolescent idolatry visible at the Pines. Styles change, but eight out of a hundred men remain homosexual, and some will be at the extreme. The minority of well-adjusted homosexuals share the benefits of American liberalism with the minority of well-adjusted heterosexuals. Sex should be given its due, but no more.

SCOTT R. KING
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is sad that a magazine published under Jewish auspices, and one that I help support as a subscriber, should be a party to the bigotry, ignorance, and seeming personal insecurity that is characteristic of much of Midge Decter's article about gay people. The article illustrates the kinds of stereotyping and "blaming-the-victim" analyses that so frequently have been directed against Jews

It would be as if a "feeling-displaced" Catskill or North Shore Long Island Wasp were to write an article about Jews based on perceptions of the behavior of some Jews on their vacations at the Concord or at Jewish country clubs. Such an article would certainly fail to do justice to the complexity of the Jewish experience in America and to the painful, ordinary, and sometimes happy adjustments to stigma that characterize the behavior of Jews, gays, and other stigmatized people. . . .

ALBERT FRIEDMAN
Monmouth College
West Long Branch, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's article is long on opinion and short on support for her views. She cites very few sources, and for her major argument, which I summarize here, I can find no evidence at all. I am writing to ask Miss Decter to provide her readers with evidence with which to evaluate her statements. Let it be noted at the outset that the article cloaks most of its content in autobiography, although the author's thesis about "the homosexual community" never qualifies its generalizations or admits that they are almost without exception based solely on conjecture and hearsay.

The thesis is as follows:

1. In her youth, the author spent summers on Fire Island; she observed "the homosexual community" there and concluded, with some misgivings, that gay men, although heavily dependent on alcohol and their mothers, were entertaining, typified by "tender, sweet, vain, pouting, girlish attention to youth and beauty."

2. This state of affairs has changed. Gay men are no longer amusing; now they are trying to kill themselves, or at least are caught up in politics which render them as dull and drab as everybody else who is political.

3. Gay Liberation produced the transformation. No longer "in flight" from social intolerance and repression, gay men have ceased to be charming ornaments to resort cultures. They have lost their social purpose, they have fallen victim to the self-hatred which repression had kept under control, and now they want to die. Hence it was better for homosexuals to be repressed; that way non-gay people could gingerly enjoy them, and didn't have to think about them too much.

Anyone with a high-school education can see that Miss Decter attempts to characterize "the homosexual community" of Fire Island as a single, undifferentiated mass. Even if it were this—and since it is composed of individuals, it cannot be so undifferentiated as she imag-

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ines—the Fire Island community could never be taken as typical of gay men "on the whole," or "as a group." Most homosexual men have never been to Fire Island; some probably don't know where it is, and it is safe to say that most American gay males don't particularly care where it is, since they live tens, hundreds, and thousands of miles from it. Hence Miss Decter attempts to profile a minority group on the basis of what, let us admit, is a highly atypical sampling. . . .

The "homosexual community" generalized about in point No. 2 is more difficult to define, since Miss Decter's sources for it appear to be a report of a survey (*Homosexualities*), a travel book (*States of Desire*), some novels (how many and which we don't find out), a television program, and her own observations and conversations. Once again "the homosexual community" is an undifferentiated mass. Miss Decter nowhere allows for the possibility that her meager sources reflect the lives of only a tiny portion of gay American men. *Homosexualities* is a study of San Francisco gay men; *States of Desire* is a book about urban areas in which high concentrations of gay men live. Most gay men do not live in San Francisco; most gay men do not live in the gay ghettos which support gay bars and entertainment spots. Miss Decter's sources describe the lives of only a small percentage of gay men; and once again the sampling is atypical. . . .

Thus, Miss Decter's third point is at best a generalization based on a comparison between the atypical gay males she used to see, and those she reads about, hears about, and sees now. Her descriptions of gay men's lives have nothing to do with the way the majority of gay men think, live, and act. And even within the highly selective populations she so unscientifically surveys, her sources are unreliable. . . .

To particulars for a moment. Miss Decter says, p. 40, that "anyone acquainted with them [gay men] as a group" can see that gay men have not "established much of a presence in basic industry or government service," or in "doctoring and lawyering" (though law was a popular profession among the Fire Island gay men who appeared on p. 35). She also says that "few of them have ever made much effort in these directions." How does she *know* this? How does she know anything about gay doctors and lawyers? . . . What does she know about homosexuals in the military? In government service? Since she knows gay men "as a group," she must know something, must have some information, to support this statement. She admits that she is not "certain" about this charge. This does not keep her from making it. I point out that she appears to have not a shred of evidence for the statement, and that this kind of dishonest "reasoning" is apparent throughout her article. She knows perfectly well, no doubt, that doctors, lawyers, and other professionals who emphasize their minority identity win a following within that group, but do not earn the general respect of the profession. This was once true of Jews, of course; it is still true of gay doctors and lawyers. . . .

Miss Decter tries to justify her generalizations by saying that generalities are the only way to get at "the truth about homosexuals." Can we "get at" the truth about any population group, any group of individuals, in this way? All the generalizations I know about blacks, Jews, Hispanics, women, the handicapped, and other minority groups are unfair; so are all Miss Decter's generalizations about gay men, who have, she claims, their own speech, their own wit, and their own, distinctive, talents. What is her evidence for this? . . .

I also want to know how Miss Decter *knows*, or *knew*, that gay men on Fire Island slept with each other not because they were in love, or even aroused by male sexuality, but because they wanted to avoid "the sexual reminder of birth and death." She argues, in part, that gay men avoid women because they do not want to be fathers; what has she to say about non-gay men who sleep with women who frustrate fertilization by birth control? Is their desire to avoid "replacement of oneself by others" any different, in its consequences for population growth, from male homosexual intercourse? Is Miss Decter aware of even a fraction of the evidence from many and various quarters which show that avoidance of the female is not a motivating factor in most male homosexuality? If she is, she ought to have registered her awareness that her own generalizations and conjecture contradicted some of the best psychological research available on the topic. But obviously Miss Decter is not interested in information, in reasoned argumentation, or in any of the other qualities which characterize intelligent discourse.

It seems highly likely to me that Miss Decter knows her article is unfair and unsubstantiated, brimming with stereotypes and generalizations which destroy its credibility. I have tried to imagine what sort of justification will be offered when readers demand that she produce some support for her statements. I am reminded of many articles in the *Village Voice* in which authors disregard facts and fairness in order to provide us with the details of their *very own* personal experience of some phenomenon—a race riot, a disco, the recession, and so forth. In every case autobiography serves as a vehicle for unfounded generalizations which do not have to be defended or explained because they are personal views. What we see, then, is that COMMENTARY too will provide a platform for anyone with the right set of prejudices; it is not interested in exploring or defining issues, or in reasoned exchange among fair-minded people, but in the promotion of misinformation, misunderstanding, and ill-will. Aim low, and hit the target.

ALLEN J. FRANTZEN
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

What possible justification can there be for publishing Midge Decter's "The Boys on the Beach"? In place of serious ideas, documentation, or reasoned analysis, it offers nothing but a surfeit of impressionistic, anecdotal reminiscences turned to malicious purpose.

All the shopworn goods of queer-baiting are represented, the very same clichés we've heard countless times before. "The homosexuals" (Miss Decter constantly refers to them thus, as a monolithic mass) appear desperate and driven, not gay; are "by inclination highly promiscuous"; are "ensconced" in certain creative professions; seek, as dress designers, to desex women; despise and ridicule straights; court the police attention they complain of; are readily recognizable to the "open-eyed" viewer; care principally for clothes, parties, and appearances; and so on. Has *any* traditional slur been omitted?

Had Miss Decter added some instances to show that "the blacks" are crazy for watermelon and snappy shoes and that "the Jews" are sharp-dealing shysters, she

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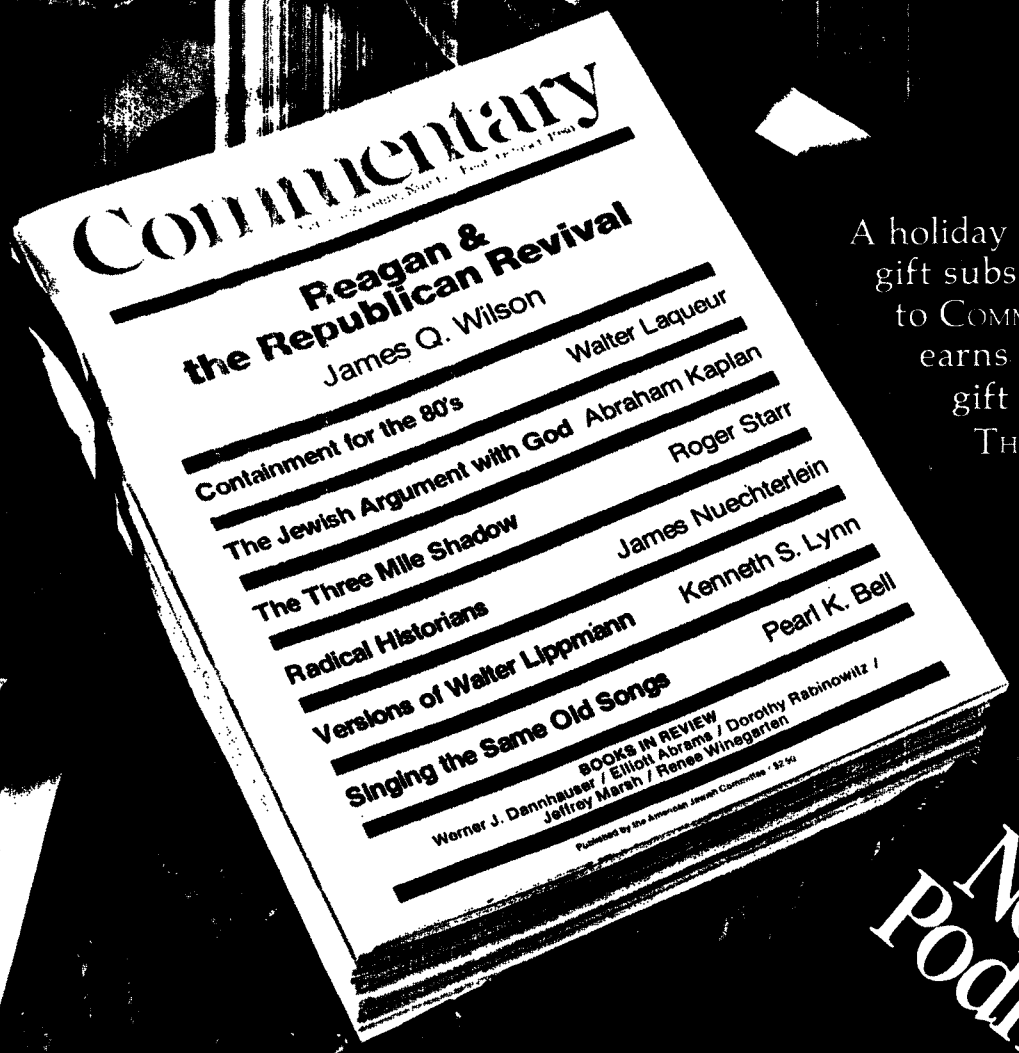

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would not have lowered the tone or intellectual level of her article in any way. Such caricatures are all of a piece. . . .

Insult has been given not just to homosexuals, but also to the decency and intelligence of every reader.

G. R. PATERSON
Evanston, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A few years ago, there was a best-selling book by Eric Berne entitled *Games People Play*. One of these "games" was called "blame the victim." A very clear and very shocking example of this game is played by Midge Decter. One of the major themes of her article is the idea that all homosexuals are masochists who enjoy being arrested, being beaten up by punks, being murdered, and committing suicide. Thus, in so many words, what she is saying is this: the victim is always to blame. He is merely getting what he asked for, what he deserves. There is therefore no reason to feel any sympathy or even pity for the victim. This is a shockingly callous attitude to take about any group of people. Would Jews not be outraged if homosexuals were to adopt a similar attitude toward the recent victims of anti-Semitism in France? Apparently, if Miss Decter were to witness a man being beaten up on the streets by a gang of punks, she would insist upon withholding her sympathy until his sexual habits had been determined. If she found out that he was a homosexual, she would probably mutter, "The fag had it coming to him," and walk on without even bothering to call the police. This is a very cold-blooded and unsavory attitude to have. . . .

In your next diatribe, why don't you claim that homosexuals are in the habit of the ritual murder of kidnapped children on the altars of their churches, in conformity with the *Protocols of the Elders of Sodom*?

STEPHEN W. FOSTER
Miami, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is appalling that a journal which aims "to enlighten and clarify public opinion" and "to fight bigotry and protect human rights" could publish Midge Decter's maliciously misinformed article on homosexuality. Even if the article were factually correct, it does not even attempt to address itself to any issues raised by the Gay Lib movement, but rather seems designed to perpetuate the image of the homosexual as pathetic freak, doomed to suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse, and sado-masochistic death wishes. This apparently absolves the reader from any responsibility to consider the reality of gay life and gay oppression.

That reality includes 200,000 "pink triangles" in the crematoriums of the Third Reich. It includes over 1,500 men and women unjustly discharged from the Armed Services annually. It includes countless instances of job and housing discrimination, and unequal legal rights in all fifty states. It includes murder, blackmail, assault, police brutality, and entrapment. It includes gangs of fag-bashing punks kicking gays to death in dark alleys. It includes the mental and physical abuse of gay foster children by the state and the quieter anguish of gay teenagers growing up in isolation all over the country. Miss Decter should ask herself how typical Fire Island really is of the United States. Society has always made exceptions for the unusually affluent or exceptionally talented homosexual. What does that have to do with the millions of ordinary gay men and women who are not fashionable jet-set lawyers, ad executives, psychotherapists, decorators, or writers?

At the same time that Miss Decter was being amused and mystified by the "beautiful people" on Fire Island, most gays were being confronted with a church, society, government, and medical establishment which viewed them as depraved sinners, child molesters, objects of ridicule, criminals, or neurotic wretches who needed to be socialized, lobotomized, drugged, arrested, or shocked into sexual conformity. It was very difficult to find any information which suggested that homosexuals could lead happy, productive lives and have stable, loving relationships. Most gays had to discover that for themselves. Many still do. It should not surprise anyone that many gays turn to alcohol, drugs, compulsive sex, or suicide as anodynes to the pressures of leading a closeted existence, or that many fall into a lifelong pattern of self-abusive behavior. There is clear evidence, however, that this is not typical of most gays, and the fact that most homosexuals manage to survive, lead productive lives in every profession, and find lovers is a triumph of our tenacity and love of life. This is obviously not what Miss Decter is prepared to hear, but it is a far more accurate portrayal of the gay community than her trivialized impressions of a twenty-year-old resort scene.

The use of drugs, at least marijuana, is fairly common in the gay community, as is alcohol abuse. In case anyone hasn't noticed, these substances are widely used and abused by heterosexuals as well. They are certainly not "ubiquitous." Suicide statistics are curious things also. The rate for single heterosexuals, old people, Indians, and various other groups are higher than the norm. Are all these conditions pathological? As to the prevalence of sado-masochism among homosexuals, if there are a hundred establishments (out of the several thousand gay bars and bookstores in this country) which cater to the S-M trade, I would be surprised. S-M remains kinky, more the butt of camp humor than a widespread activity. Moreover, there is ample historical and current evidence that much of the S-M activity is heterosexual. The S-M shop filmed in the "brilliant documentary" *Gay Power/Gay Politics* is in reality patronized predominantly by heterosexuals. (This was only one of the factual distortions which marred that supposed documentary.) Are heterosexuals therefore pathological?

Do straights not decorate their homes? Does the designer-jeans (and everything else) craze reflect heterosexual indifference to personal appearance? Of what significance are Miss Decter's comments except to trivialize and Freudianize away any serious attention to the gay movement and its demands? The question of the relative hirsuteness of gay men may matter to Miss Decter, but palls somewhat for those of us confronting the Moral Majority which wishes to kill or imprison several million of us.

Midge Decter is disappointed that gay protest has not been more "witty and arresting," and is devoid of "dash and high taste." Perhaps a minstrel show would amuse? Many people were no doubt surprised when downtown San Francisco was trashed and burned by "humorless" gays, or when 100,000 angry fags and dykes assembled in Washington to petition Congress for equality under the law. Perhaps

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a kick line in drag would appeal to Miss Decter, but riots and single-issue politics seem much more effective to me.

FRIEDRICH KOENIG
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter's attack on gay people brought back a lot of fear and bigotry. Growing up Jewish in a Gentile and mildly anti-Semitic Southern California suburb, I learned very early that people with the need to blame, resent, and hate will always find convenient targets, and evidentiary bits and pieces of life can always be gathered, distorted, and fashioned into a mosaic of untruth supporting even the basest prejudice. Miss Decter slanders a large part of the population, and each lie must be refuted.

Many of the most hurtful remarks are crude stereotypes. Any of your readers familiar with gay people will reject them. For the others, comparisons with a bigotry COMMENTARY's audience can appreciate will suffice.

Most of Miss Decter's observations come from time spent among gays vacationing at Fire Island, the leading resort for a certain segment of well-to-do gay New Yorkers. Making generalizations about all homosexuals, and that is what Miss Decter presumes to do for fourteen pages, from this sample is akin to defining the American Jewish community after repeated visits to Grossinger's or characterizing heterosexuals after a stay at Club Med. Of course, no valid conclusions are possible. Nevertheless, Miss Decter comes up with quite a few possibilities, and they are revealing in their familiarity.

She sneers at the stylish ostentation and showy display of gay parties. While growing up, and during four years of college at Harvard, I heard wealthy Protestants explain that Jews were not welcome in their communities and clubs because of their crass, vulgar, and showy taste and socializing. Indeed, Miss Decter's image of the gay man as devoted to nothing but his tan and wardrobe is the exact stereotype of Jewish-American women I heard repeated and joked about incessantly. Comments about the "hairless" bodies and promiscuity of gay men are best compared to the cracks about the breast size and alleged sexual frigidity of Jewish women which were such favorities of heterosexual college men.

I resort to analogy because actual argument seems so futile and beside the point in the face of this kind of assault; it can only be exposed for the ugly ridicule that it is.

Miss Decter finds it hard to believe complaints of housing and job discrimination given the obvious affluence of the Fire Island gay men. Any Jew understands that economic well-being can coexist with the fiercest persecution; pre-Nazi German Jewry was quite well off. She generalizes about the biting and spiteful gay wit. One wonders how it differs from that of Don Rickles or Henny Youngman, or even Richard Pryor, for that matter. People who have known hard times and emotions, who have lived on the razor's edge, develop appropriately sharp senses of humor. Miss Decter points to the extreme "social competitiveness" of the gay scene. Surely, it does not compare with the rivalries and venom evinced by those of her own milieu regularly in the letters columns of this magazine, in the book reviews, and in similar publications.

Miss Decter's insinuations of homosexual subversion of heterosexual life come closest of all to replicating the historical patterns of modern anti-Semitism. Just as she finds gay playwrights and fashion designers producing grotesque visions and models for straight people, Nazi propagandists alleged Jewish domination of the media and the visual arts to be the source of Aryan cultural erosion and decline. Miss Decter intimates that the stark portrayals of modern American family life are somehow unique to gay writers. I have heard the same charge leveled against the postwar generation of Jewish writers. It does seem to be that modern literature is one great howl of torment, but the onus, if one feels the need to place one, does not lie with any single group. Surely the very heterosexual existentialists are the most profound representatives of the trend. . . .

One cannot help but marvel at Miss Decter's obvious preoccupation with gay people and their sex lives. She presents us with ample evidence, at times more than a little embarrassing, of the strangest sort of lurid fascination. Having no "hangouts of [their] own" and apparently nothing better to do with their vacation evenings, she and her straight friends frequented Fire Island's gay bars. Throughout those summers, she admits, her attention "was engaged to the fullest" by the gays, indeed, "by little else." Miss Decter and brood "tramp" along the shore to the rougher gay bars of Cherry Grove. While the gays of the Pines prefer to avoid that clientele, Miss Decter clearly finds it worth the journey. She also finds herself, presumably unavoidably, passing along the sexually active "meat-rack" after sundown. Perhaps most telling of all, Miss Decter confesses to those 3:00 A.M. glances "through one's window" in order to observe gay goings-on and, of course, be appropriately shocked and revolted. Miss Decter is quick to assure us that she always exits these gatherings before things "take a turn" she would "prefer not to witness." Her quite vivid imagination is very efficient at filling in the missing details.

All of this attention to gays is profoundly troubling, especially given her clear purpose of judgment and condemnation. Her motivation seems to lie in her need to explain what she sees as the shortcomings of present-day social and sexual relations. Gay men seem to be the antagonists against which she can proclaim and defend her own vision of the world. But the feelings are confused. Miss Decter's reactions are a peculiar blend of jealousy, fear, and extreme discomfort.

Miss Decter's envy surfaces throughout. She is troubled that so many of the gays seem to have rejected the nine-to-five routine and opted for jobs giving them such long, presumably longer than her own, vacations at Fire Island. She is impressed at the disproportionate gay presence among what she considers the "talented." Gays are described as "carefree," "playful," and existing in "an air of sportiness, of freedom from financial care, that the heterosexuals did not feel." All of this is presented as criticism and Miss Decter goes to great lengths to expose the ugly underside of fun. Yet her deprecating tone cannot belie her genuine resentment of the gays' dissociation from those burdens, drudgeries, and commitments by which she so insistently defines her own life. . . .

Miss Decter's rage at what she

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"ALEKSANDR KRUGLOV, the Soviet soldier who burst into the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan and sought asylum, 'voluntarily' decided to return to the USSR after meeting with the Soviet ambassador to Afghanistan, who reportedly promised no retaliation. We'll never know whether the Soviets will keep their promise, but if it's any consolation, before Kruglov left the Kabul Embassy he was given the private number of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow."

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perceives to be gay life is more explicable once one sees the dissatisfaction she feels for her own, and the result is characteristic of classic puritanism. Essentially, for her, homosexuality raises "the specter of sex," and one is inclined to suppose that that becomes the major ingredient of her reaction. She presents that classic formulation of life as something to be borne and endured; the family unit becoming the conduit for the transmission of all of its hardships. Pleasure and enjoyment are clearly suspect. Miss Decter is snide in noting how the gays "commenced to dance" upon their arrival at the Pines; certainly, opposition to other people's form of dance, to sensual movement of any kind, is the puritan's most depressing hallmark.

Miss Decter effectively spreads her views. She and the straight mothers of the Pines take their children to the beach in order to laugh derisively at the gay chorus routines at the water's edge. Miss Decter teaches judgment, condescension, and superiority, and children learn these lessons only too well. Perhaps the saddest part of her story is that one in ten of those children on the shore will themselves grow up to be gay. The seeds of scorn and ridicule implanted by those mothers will yield a most ugly harvest for the gay youths as the hatred and fear is turned inward.

This is what the activists at *Harper's* were trying to explain. Miss Decter prefers not to listen; her own theories of gay self-destructiveness better conform to her prejudices. She blames "the hurricane of the 60's" for the loss of her generation's children. She would do better to look to the rigidity, intolerance, and hypocrisy of their parents, which so many of those children are determined to reject.

At the core of Miss Decter's reaction lies her bottom-line anxiety. She locates the source of male homophobia in the straight man's fear that he is "being diminished" in his role. She gives this apprehension a very cerebral context of concern about affronts to one's chosen identity and familial commitments. This is misleading. If Miss Decter were to enter a lesbian bar, I am quite sure her reaction, her fear, would not stem from intellectual doubt or challenge; the fear and threat would be of a rather more emotional and primal variety. The point of homophobia is not, as Miss Decter would caricature it, that latent homosexuals are as numerous as the "stars in the firmament"; instead, it is that all people have some degree of bisexual impulses and, sadly, most have been taught to live in terror of them. This terror produces most dangerous pathologies. . . .

Miss Decter writes a lot about "girlishness," a class of infantile traits she attributes to gay men; but her own attitudes represent its pathetic form. Miss Decter's feelings of sexual rejection by, and corresponding resentment of, gay men characterize the mentality of the young girl socialized into the belief that her self-worth depends upon her physical attractiveness to men. It is the essence of our sexist society; women, denied all else, are left to manipulate sex appeal as their only resource. Female survival comes to depend upon man's "unending thralldom" to the female body and its possessor. This is the objectification of the woman at its worst.

If Miss Decter would listen to the Women's Liberation movement, she would learn that this state of affairs need not persist. She could then be less threatened by gay men and the women they have not rejected and who have not rejected them. Instead, she degrades the relationships of gay males with their mothers and those straight women who "decorate" their scene. Miss Decter insists upon besmirched motives as explanations for these ongoing male-female ties that contain no sexual component. It is another tension of the ideology; insistence upon a single heterosexual model involves puritan disdain of all deviating sexuality as well as antipathy toward those platonic relations between men and women which "mock" the heterosexual bed. Yet it all flows naturally from Miss Decter's notion that a man's failure to sleep with women should be construed as rejection of, "flight from," and an immature refusal to be "domesticated" by them. This can only make sense to one who accepts the premise that woman's domestication of man and man's provision for woman are the bases of human relations.

It is, of course, a revaluation of human relationships, and not freedom of sexual promiscuity, which lies at the heart of Gay Liberation. It is a movement concerned with

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love, choice, human interaction and identity; sex becomes relevant as it relates to those issues. Just as Miss Decter misses this focus, she fails to understand the nature of gay persecution, the resulting destructiveness, and the corresponding need for liberation. Gays do not "migrate" from the Midwest; they flee its hatreds and intolerance. Gays are not exuberantly vacationing from New York City jobs because they have escaped "the tyranny of circumspection" or propriety; they rejoice at the opportunity to be themselves, to be open, to enjoy a respite from other people's scrutiny and stigmatizing. Gays do not have a "different relation" to the police because, as Miss Decter suggests, they all court danger by soliciting prostitutes on the streets; the major element of that relationship is the unprovoked and egregious brutality gays regularly suffer at the hands of those who police us. Almost any gay civil-rights organization will provide abundant documentation.

Physical and psychological victimization of gay people is the embittering reality. If Miss Decter could sense it, she might understand how it gets internalized and why it must be overcome. Gay Liberation has to do with people's right to be themselves and form the affectional bonds they desire, free from harassment and the need to conceal. These are public rights which cannot be pursued by "silence, exile, and cunning." Indeed, the efforts to secure them will increasingly take the form of political demands and resistance. If Miss Decter loathes the internalization of gay rage and violence in sado-masochism, I predict she will be much more disconcerted as it increasingly produces outward manifestations. Similarly, while the rallying cry of "Out of the bars and into the streets" may reduce the gay alcohol-consumption level she so abhors, I doubt that the trade-off will be to her liking. This struggle has a very long and proud history. It was not "inspired" by the 60's, nor will it expire with the denunciations from Miss Decter and her allies. . . .

As a Jewish person, and as a gay person, I know that no amount of argument or number of contrary examples will assuage the determined bigotry and stereotyping of the confirmed believer. So long as Miss Decter persists in seeing gays as "a group so readily distinguishable" and "as a collectivity," she will be able to make whatever fierce generalizations she wishes to make. Among those qualities of gay men she comes up with are "tender, sweet, vain, pouting, girlish." I would respond that her whole enterprise is "vicious, mean, ugly, vituperative, monstrous." I have never encountered an account as hostile as hers, not even among the working classes, which she pretends are the remaining repositories of anti-gay bias. When Miss Decter complains that gays do "all of the ridiculing," I can only think that it must be difficult to see the tornado of hatred when one stands so squarely in its eye.

Among her final comments is the most telling and horrifying example of Miss Decter's sensibilities. After a prolonged exploration of gay sado-masochism, she conjures up an image of a gay man "lying spent in a pool of blood" as being the "ultimate posture" of gay life. The prose flows very smoothly, and the effect is quite chilling; Miss Decter is a pro at this stuff. I believe as firmly as everything I have said above that any impulse to see that figure and that blood as the culmination of a gay person's life, and any satisfaction, much less erotic fulfillment deriving therefrom, is supplied entirely from the well of Miss Decter's own passions, soul, and hatred. It is the most sordid of observations, and to suggest it is incredible. To follow it with a cheap cocktail party joke about sadists and masochists is pornographic.

Some final words must truly be directed to the editors and publication committee of COMMENTARY. . . . Among the avowed purposes of the American Jewish Committee and COMMENTARY is "to fight bigotry and protect human rights." Over a year ago COMMENTARY published an article by Samuel McCracken on the same subject and expressing this same viewpoint. Now it publishes this piece by a second person with conspicuously little authority on or experience with the subject. Both of these articles are full-scale attacks. I do not think it COMMENTARY's intention, but these articles play into and lend credence to the anti-gay crusade, one of the most totalitarian, bigoted forces sweeping the nation today. I am not surprised that such views exist, but as a former loyal subscriber to your magazine, I am outraged that COMMENTARY consistently provides them a forum. I suppose you will never recognize the viciousness and danger which they contain. I wonder if the insulated leaders of intellectual American Jewry ever will. I suspect that your fathers and mothers, as they fled the pogroms and genocide of Europe, would have, just maybe.

DAVID A. KARNES
Boalt School of Law
University of California
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I do not understand what was intended by the publication of Midge Decter's myopic and terribly mean-spirited article on male homosexuals, "The Boys on the Beach." The intention was obviously not to promote understanding between human beings.

I find it particularly distressing when a member of one group of people with a history of oppression seeks to discredit and create ill-feeling toward another oppressed people (Miss Decter should be reminded that homosexuals as well as Jews were exterminated by the thousands in the Nazi gas chambers). As a homosexual, I am frustrated and angry; as a Jew, I am appalled and ashamed.

IAN STULBERG
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Rarely have I seen a more homophobic article than "The Boys on the Beach," or one more designed to appeal to the worst prejudices of people. The excesses Midge Decter ascribes to the gay world can be found equally in the straight world, if she had had the same prurient interest in pursuing that study. Breasts are frequently objects of as much excessive adoration in the straight world as phalluses may be in the gay world, and drugs are certainly not unknown among heterosexuals. Excess and even depravity are conditions which may be found in all parts of humanity and are not the exclusive preserve of either the gay or straight world. They should not be the basis for defining whole groups of people.

EDWARD WENDEL
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Midge Decter indulges in the

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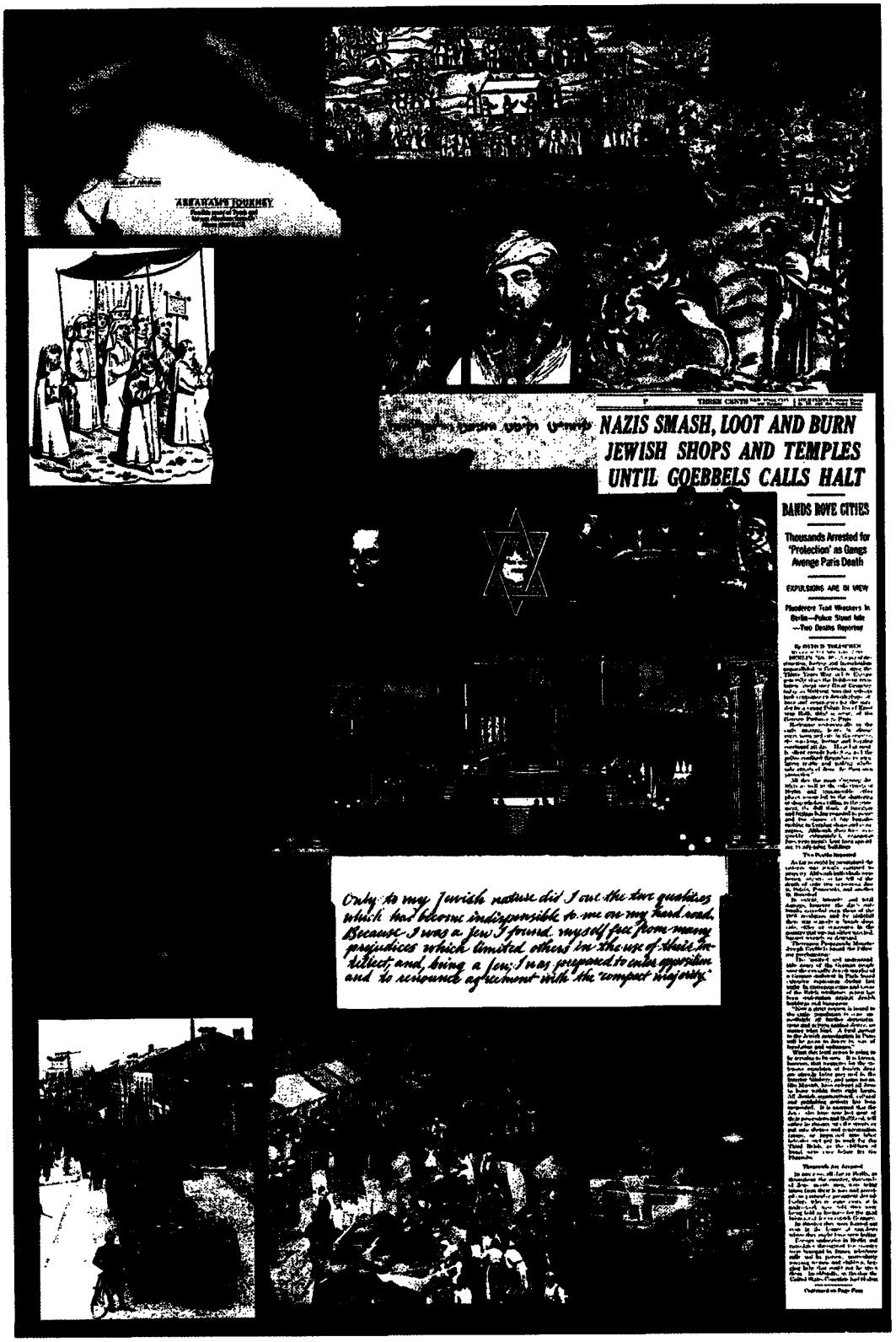
ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY
NAZIS SMASH, LOOT AND BURN JEWISH SHOPS AND TEMPLES UNTIL GOEBBELS CALLS HALT
BANDS ROVE CITIES
Thousands Arrested for 'Protection' as Gangs Avenge Paris Death
EXPULSIONS ARE IN VIEW
Plunderers Trail Wreckers in Berlin—Police Stunt Idle —Two Deaths Reported
Only to my Jewish nature did I owe the two qualities which had become indispensible to me on my hard road. Because I was a Jew I found myself free from many prejudices which limited others in the use of their intellect, and, being a Jew, I was prepared to enter opposition and to renounce agreement with the "compact majority."

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ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY

A radiant image of the Jewish heritage

The editors of COMMENTARY are proud to offer a remarkable work of art: *Abraham's Journey* by the American artist Joan Hall. This original silkscreen/lithograph, in a limited edition of only two hundred fifty impressions, is now being made available exclusively through COMMENTARY in a once-in-a-lifetime offering.

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Abraham's Journey is a colorful and sophisticated panorama of the Jewish journey through history, from the Bible to the present day. Here in one collage are twenty of the most evocative images of the Jewish experience to be found in the collections of great museums around the world. Among the eminent institutions contributing to this documentary art project are the YIVO Institute For Jewish Research, the British Museum, Leo Baeck Institute, Bibliothèque Nationale, and Central Zionist Archive, Jerusalem.

Painstakingly assembled through a research project that occupied several years of work, *Abraham's Journey* artfully combines manuscript illuminations, engravings, and photographs with original calligraphy and brush work. The result is a composition awash in bold colors and vibrant with the full sweep and meaning of Jewish history.

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In striking visual detail, *Abraham's Journey* surveys four thousand years of Jewish religious tradition, cultural achievement, and contributions to Western civilization. The wanderings of the patriarch Abraham. The Twelve Tribes around the Ark of the Covenant. The Scroll of the Law. Medieval rabbis engaged in religious discussion. Polish cheder boys at study. Engraved portraits of Moses Maimonides and Moses Mendelssohn, and an excerpt from Sigmund Freud's famous letter to the B'nai B'rith.

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same willful blindness and "almost total selectivity of perception" for which she castigates liberal supporters of Gay Lib. Exactly what is to be inferred from the growing gay S-M scene? Presumably Miss Decter is aware that a "new wave of domination and bondage" is also breaking among heterosexuals. Perhaps heterosexuals are also becoming increasingly frantic and obsessed with self-destruction? Perhaps there are general suicidal and sado-masochistic trends in American culture which affect both groups?

For many years sado-masochistic pornography involving leather, bondage, whips, and spanking has appealed primarily to heterosexual misogynists who enjoy seeing women abused. As feminists have shrilly complained, this kind of stuff is increasingly infiltrating soft-core sex magazines such as *Penthouse*. Institutionalized opportunities to act out one's sado-masochist proclivities, e.g., to date an amiable "dominatrix," are not scarce either. But when homosexuals get into the act and imitate heterosexuals in tawdriness, smug homophobes point to this as evidence for the innate depravity of homosexuality and the perniciousness of Gay Liberation. . . .

There is only one sense in which Gay Liberation is responsible for growing gay S-M. Sexual liberation in general allows all sorts of deviations—homosexual, heterosexual, and animosexual—to burgeon and become strident. Freedom of political expression gives us Nazi demonstrations and freedom of sexual expression gives us magazines about "tempting tots" or "watersports" (sexual gratification from urination and enemas). But this has no implications for the alleged pathological quality of the homosexual option *per se*.

The stigmatization of homosexuality on the basis of homosexual sado-masochism has a vicious by-product other than the persecution of gays. The heterosexual sado-masochist easily gets the impression that certain kinds of depravity are intrinsically associated with homosexuality, and, by implication, what he wants to do to women is legitimate. The myth of the healthy heterosexual is no less destructive than its counterpart, the myth of the sick faggot.

THOMAS ROBBINS
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am a homosexual who had not the faintest inkling of such a preference until middle age. As one, therefore, who is by background straight but who is now gay, I can perhaps react to Midge Decter's article with more balance than most.

One does not have to agree with Miss Decter's suggestions that homosexuals tend toward suicide, sado-masochism, and adolescent attitudes in order to concede that homosexuality is a less felicitous state than heterosexuality. The Gay Lib movement's attempts to ennoble and glorify homosexuality are even more absurd than Miss Decter's attempt to debase it. It is a pity that everyone can't relax and treat homosexuality as a disability like having to wear glasses.

That said, let's get down to specifics. First, the homosexual obsession with youth and beauty is not the adolescent syndrome Miss Decter makes it out to be. All men are physically attracted to youth and beauty: straights to its female embodiment and gays to the male. So both females and gay males must take care of themselves if they are to attract males. Women, unlike men, seem less concerned with such matters—luckily for straight men, who can therefore get fat and dowdy yet retain their sex appeal. I daresay that Miss Decter's female chums at the Pines were much trimmer and better dressed than their husbands.

Miss Decter is totally wrong in attributing homosexuality to a flight from paternity and the aging that accompanies it. I think that almost as many gays as straights would like to have children—though not too many of either seem anxious to have them these days. But more important, gay men are no more frightened of aging than females who by and large are anxious to have children at some point in their lives, even though they can be aged physically as well as psychologically by having them. Rather, homosexuality is a flight from women, from a possessiveness and devotion that is endearing and strengthening to straights, but suffocating and threatening to gays.

Miss Decter observes that straight family men seem to fear gays because gay lives are relatively ungrubby and "job for job and income for income gays live better." When I was straight, I tended to look down on gays rather than fear them, because it was my impression then, one which continues now, that given the same levels of intelligence and education, gays are, more often than not, less successful than straights. There is a reason for this other than the obvious one of the straights' having perhaps to support wife and children. Both straight and gay men like and admire men more than women. The straight man can best get the affection and admiration of his fellow males by succeeding; the gay male by being sexually attractive to his male friends. The arduous path to success is not as important a need for the gay.

Miss Decter quite correctly emphasizes that gays exaggerate the economic discrimination against them. But she fails to note that they are discriminated against socially. Gays cannot display sexual affection openly and are avoided by all but the most "liberal" straights on social occasions. Thus a male friend and I recently vacationed at a predominantly straight Caribbean resort, where I had been many times previously as a straight. In the past I had mixed easily with the other guests. But this time we were treated with great reserve.

With no figures to back her up, Miss Decter states that sado-masochism is common and on the rise among gays. With no figures to back me up, I submit that she grossly exaggerates. Only a fraction of gay bars are "leather," and by no means all of their patrons are "into" violence. Many are simply drawn to the supposed masculinity that leather connotes.

ROBERT W. WILSON
New York City

MIDGE DECTER writes:

Such passionate communications as those professing outrage at my essay demand to be answered one by one. But first a general response on the issue of bigotry, for that is the central charge leveled against me by all my critics. This is a charge impossible for any author to answer by reference to his own text. For what is he to say? You are wrong, Mr. _____, I am not bigoted? In a literary essay, bigotry or the lack thereof is an issue that must be decided by the reader on the basis of the quality, which very much includes the tone, of the work.

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The accusation in these letters, however, does not seem to me to be based on any problem of tone or betrayal of attitude in what actually appeared on the page: nowhere can I find my words or phrases quoted in even a reasonable facsimile of a relation to the subject or description or idea to which they were in fact applied. No, what is implicit in the charge is that I am to be considered a bigot simply for having written an essay on the subject of homosexuals in any terms except those authorized by the Gay Rights movement.

Homosexuality has in recent years certainly become a discussible subject—indeed, it is the self-styled representatives of the homosexual community who have lately been most vociferous in demanding that we discuss it, in one context or another, endlessly. But the discussion they demand of us is not to be in the slightest measure a free one or an honest one. It is not even one to be confined within agreed-upon boundaries of good taste. Rather, from here on out, they insist, the discussion of homosexuality is to be exclusively one whose terms are defined and regulated by a small, interested group of ideologues and whose only acceptable outcome is to be a series of narrow, regimented, politicized affirmations. Which is to say, non-homosexuals are to be permitted only to march in line and vote "aye."

We have, of course, seen such efforts at the interdiction of discussion—moral and intellectual bullying in the righteous name of social need—before. A number of black militants were once highly effective practitioners of the art of silencing those, black and white, who had something to say at variance with their own political imperatives of the moment. The same is true of the Women's Liberation movement. Alas, this mode of discourse has brought little benefit to the members of both groups so vehemently and illiberally represented. And it will, I am afraid, bring homosexuals even less.

To Albert Friedman: I nowhere "blame the victim," for I do not regard the homosexuals I have described as victims. They are men who have chosen to live in a certain way and who, like all of us, bear the consequences of their choice. That is, they are no less than anyone else responsible moral beings. Moreover, the only legitimate question about my essay—as about the hypothetical essay on Jews at the Concord (and I suggest you think again about this very telling example of your own before you charge others with stereotyping)—is whether what it sets out to describe it describes truthfully and with precision.

To Allen J. Frantzen: The evidence I adduced was the evidence of my senses; the "documents," as I made perfectly clear by my choice of literary form, was my own experience. That is the nature of a memoir. It is neither a treatise nor a policy statement. Indeed, it is often, as it was in my case, the result of an effort to account for the great gap between what is conventionally being said in treatises and policy statements and what one sees with

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one's own eyes and hears with one's own ears. Judging from your summation of what you took me to be saying, it seems clear that the memoir is a genre not only uncongenial but unfamiliar to you. That is beyond my power to remedy. I would suggest, though, that someone professing to speak in the name of evidence and responsible generalizations ought to be rather more scrupulous both in his use of quotations and in his account of the material he seeks to analyze.

To G. R. Paterson: The list you offer of my characterizations of the homosexuals I have known—while incomplete, because I said a good deal more about them, and while presented in that particular sneering tone that so often substitutes nowadays for substantive argument—is one on which I am quite willing to stand. To call such characterizations "slurs"—and the word is yours—is the very opposite of the liberal-mindedness you claim to stand for. It implies that everyone must be blessed with precisely the same virtues and commit precisely the same sins. This is a point often very difficult to establish with aspiring liberals, who like to believe that they enhance intergroup relations by denying the reality of groups and enhance life itself by painting it a uniform shade of gray. Homosexuals *do* tend to be more interested than others in aesthetic surfaces. They *do* tend to regard the straight life as grubbier, if not more desperate, than their own. They *do* tend to be promiscuous. Many of our most important designers *are* homosexual, and just ask the full-bodied women you know whether the regnant fashions of recent years have pleasingly and attractively accommodated them. Most of the homosexuals I know, when they are not on the political hustings, would be perfectly willing to assent to such propositions. And why should they not? And what, in the long run, is to be served by a denial of what everybody knows? That is not liberalism. It is, not so oddly, the subtlest—and cruelest—form of "queer-baiting" of all.

To Stephen W. Foster: I prefer to believe that you have not read my article but have only volunteered your services as a critic on the basis of hearsay. Because if you had read it, and nevertheless maintained that one of its major themes was that all homosexuals are masochists who enjoy being arrested, I'm afraid the burden of shockingly callous attitudes—as well as highly suspect selectivity of cognition—would be upon you.

To Friedrich Koenig: I seek neither to trivialize nor to Freudianize any serious attention to the gay movement and its demands. On the contrary. My attitude to that movement is as serious as it is straightforward: I offer it, and the militant homosexuals it represents, the full respect of my wholehearted opposition. Your associating that opposition with the intent to imprison and murder, however—one of the less honorable polemical tricks of a very large bag available to movement devotees—deprives you of the right to a reasoned explanation of my position.

To David A. Karnes: I suggest that you resort to analogy with the Jews not because argument seems futile but because you mean to press the well-known button of Jewish anxiety as a replacement for argument. Nevertheless, you do argue, and your argument is a variant of the old "homosexual-dread" theme: "Miss Decter's reactions are a peculiar blend of jealousy, fear, and extreme discomfort"; "pleasure and enjoyment are clearly suspect"; etc. I will not defend myself against the charge that I am not only joyless and fearful but snide, insensitive, and suffering from feelings of sexual rejection. But it might have occurred to you to think a little bit about the fact that what you know of my feelings I myself have been at some considerable pains to tell you. It is a small point, involving the nature of writing and reading, two activities that apparently are becoming ever more disjoined. As for the larger point, about the brave new world that awaits when people like me come to realize that we are being offered no less than a "revaluation of sexual relationships": I *have*, as it happens, listened to the Women's Liberation movement, long and carefully, and have found that it, too, offers not "love, choice, and identity" but a hatred of life the way it is. I freely confess to being "one who accepts the premise that woman's domestication of man and man's provision for woman are the bases of human relations."

To Ian Stulberg: I myself am about to create a liberation movement—a movement to prohibit the mention of gas chambers in any form of protest about the conditions of American life.

To Edward Wendel: Far be it from me to deny the presence of excess and depravity in heterosexual life. That did not happen to be my subject. "You're another," Mr. Wendel, has never been held to be a particularly lustrous or illuminating form of observation. In any case, I was not defining a whole group of people, I was describing a particular group of people.

To Thomas Robbins: The point about S-M was not that it is an exclusively homosexual pathology—although to my knowledge heterosexuals at least have never denied that it *was* a pathology. I did try to persuade my readers that the spread and increasing openness of S-M signify something. Whatever that something may be, the one thing it most certainly is not is an expression of sexual liberation. Nor is it freedom of political expression that gives us Nazi demonstrations. It is Nazism that gives us Nazi demonstrations. Freedom of expression only helps to make them more visible and thus more respectable. On the other side, freedom of expression is also supposed to make it possible for those opposed to such developments freely to oppose them. What sort of freedom is it that makes whips and chains sacrosanct and deprives society of its right to outlaw them both legally and morally?

To Robert W. Wilson: I wish to thank you for—no doubt without completely meaning it—having supported my view.

And I am grateful to Messrs. Nisbet, Schwarzbart, van den Haag, Gow, and King for their kind words. To Mr. King, I would only add that the pain of the working-class homosexual in a rural area, only too easy to imagine, can hardly be representative. But to your remark that political solutions to sexual problems are a sham, I offer a fervent, micro- and macro-, amen.

Freud

To the Editor of Commentary:

Reading David Aberbach's "Freud's Jewish Problem" [June], I thought of what I had always considered Freud's most revealing statement about his Jewishness, but could not recall where I had read it. The letters published in the September issue prompted me to intensify the search. . . . The statement appears in Freud's preface to

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the Hebrew translation of *Totem and Taboo,* published in 1913:

> No reader of the Hebrew version of this book will find it easy to put himself in the emotional position of the author who is ignorant of the language of the Holy Writ, who is completely estranged from the religion of his fathers—as well as from every other religion—and who cannot share in nationalistic ideas, but who has never repudiated his people, who feels in his essential nature a Jew, and who has no desire to alter that nature. If the question were put to him: "Since you have abandoned all these common characteristics of your countrymen, what is there left that is Jewish?" he would reply: "A great deal, and probably its very essence," though he could not express that essence clearly in words.

BENNO WEISER VARON
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Jewish Genealogy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Jonathan D. Sarna's review of Arthur Kurzweil's book, *From Generation to Generation* [Books in Review, August], with disbelief. Mr. Sarna distorts Kurzweil's views on Jewish genealogy and substitutes his own for the author's. . . .

The purpose of searching for information about one's family has nothing to do with nostalgia or self-congratulation; it is to investigate one's historical connection with the Jewish community. These projects stimulate interest in Jewish history, the geography of the dispersion, the evolution of Jewish culture, the cultures with which the Jews were surrounded, Yiddish, Hebrew, and numerous other subjects. The rapidly growing Jewish genealogy movement is part of the revival of Jewish studies. Mr. Sarna and other Jewish historians should be delighted with this lively development and do all they can to aid it. . . .

A Jewish family history society is being formed in the Washington area. Let us hope that similar societies will be established in every Jewish community in the United States.

BENJAMIN ADELMAN
American Friends of the Israel Exploration Society
Washington, D.C.

JONATHAN D. SARNA writes:

I am pleased to learn that a family history society is being formed in Washington, and I gladly second Benjamin Adelman's call for more. I encourage all forms of Jewish identity. The theory that narcissistic interest in personal roots will magically stimulate interest in Jewish history, however, remains to be proved. For the moment, I am more impressed by contrary evidence, particularly since Mr. Adelman is not working within the existing confines of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington, but seems rather to find a need for a far more narrowly conceived organization.

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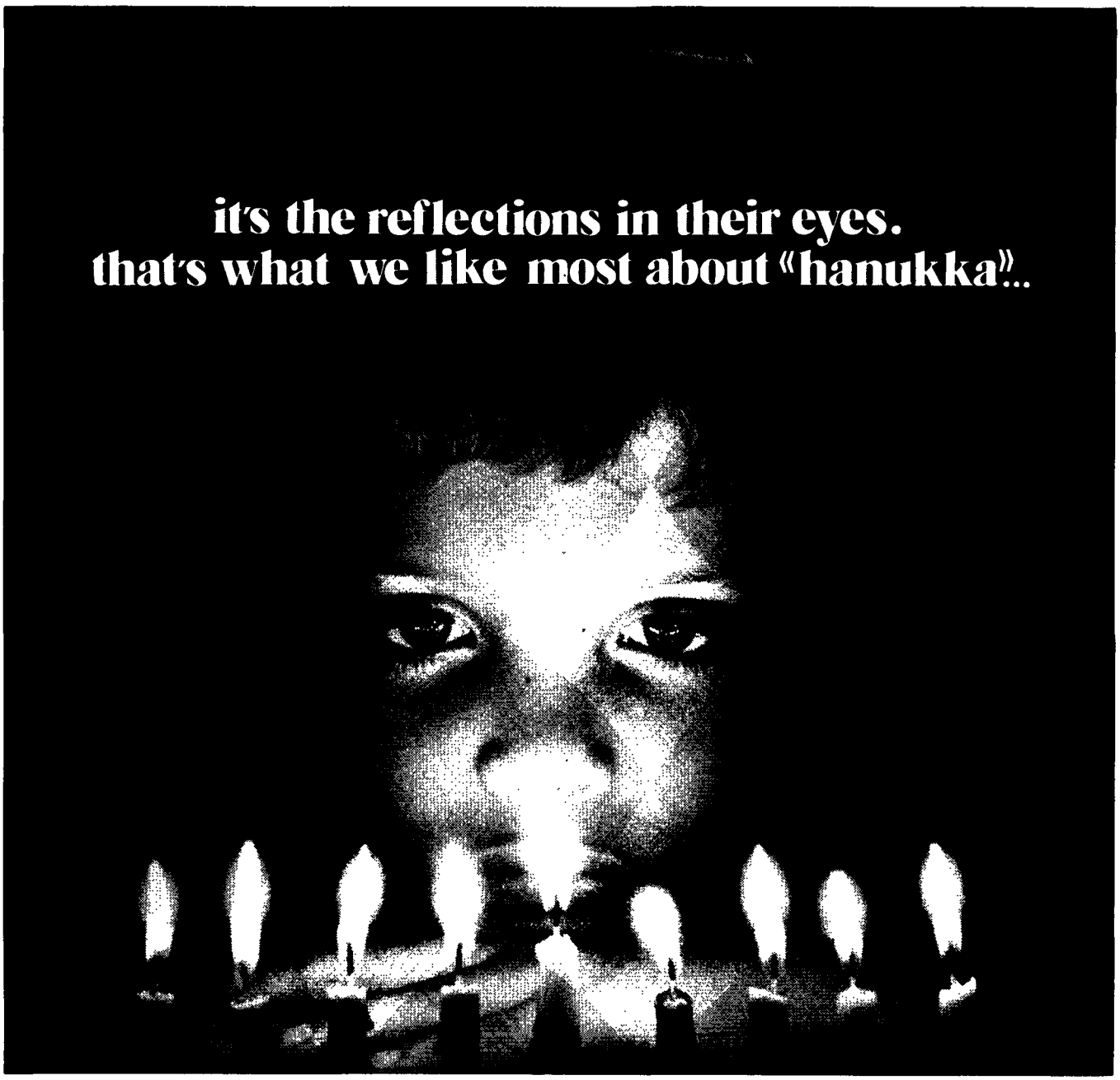

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The Feminist Mystique

Michael Levin

FEMINISM in its contemporary form is an empirical doctrine leading to recommendations for social action. The doctrine has three main tenets:

1. Physical differences apart, men and women are the same. Infant boys and girls are born with virtually the same capacities to acquire skills and motives, and if raised identically would develop identically.

2. Men occupy positions of dominance because the myth that men are more aggressive has been perpetuated by the practice of raising boys to be mastery-oriented and girls to be person-oriented. If this stereotyping ceased, leadership would be equally divided between the sexes.

3. True human individuality and fulfillment will come only when people view themselves as *human* repositories of talents and traits, without regard to sex.

Alice Rossi's "Equality Between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal"* expresses these views clearly enough:

> It will be an assumption of this essay that by far the majority of the differences between the sexes which have been noted in social research are socially rather than physiologically determined. . . . It will be a major thesis of this essay that we need to reassert the claim to sex equality. . . . By sex equality, I mean a socially androgynous conception of the roles of men and women, in which they are equal and similar in such spheres as intellectual, artistic, political, and occupational interests and participation, complementary only in those spheres dictated by physiological differences between the sexes.

Note that Miss Rossi takes the social causation of sex differences as an "assumption" which she does not find worth questioning, an attitude shared by many of today's feminists. Note as well that she takes sex differences to be the findings of "social research," as if they were not acknowledged by everybody, and as if they were not part of the lore of every culture. Other feminists admit innate gender differences but go on as if they had conceded nothing significant:

> Even if it were true that all societies so far have been patriarchal and dominated by men, and even if that dominance is based on biological differences, it is irrelevant to the situation forcing women to demand equal opportunity in America and Britain today. Even if they are sorely handicapped by lack of testosterone, it is inescapably necessary for women at this stage in human evolution to move to equality in society.†

This tendency to dismiss the factual question of gender differences as irrelevant to the demand for gender equality is completely misguided. If there are important biologically-based differences between the sexes, the rest of contemporary feminism falls apart. Moral prescriptions and social programs cannot be concocted in an empirical vacuum. It is senseless to try to make the sexes conform to an "androgynous" ideal if they cannot conform to it. What is obviously unattainable cannot be the object of rational human effort. In this sense, if the factual assumption of feminism is wrong, the rest is irrational.

Of course, the irrationality of today's feminism need not stop a determined feminist from ever more frenzied, if ever more futile, efforts to reach her goal, or from imposing ever heavier tolls on the non-malleable beneficiaries of her ideology. Evidence will have to be ignored, and the conspiratorial bias to "keep women in their place" will have to be detected and uprooted. Thus will persuasion give way to coercion.

II

IT would be good to examine the most rigorous presentation of the social-causation theory of sex differences. Unfortunately, despite the walls of books on "women" that line every bookstore, no such presentation exists. Contemporary feminism has yet to produce a single work that seriously challenges a skeptic.

MICHAEL LEVIN, a new contributor, is professor of philosophy at CCNY. He is the author of *Metaphysics and the Mind-Body Problem* and of numerous papers on the foundations of logic and mathematics.

* *Daedalus*, Spring 1964.

† Betty Friedan in the *New Statesman*, September 23, 1977.

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We may dismiss the scores of works that simply *assert* the similarity of the sexes. We may dismiss the many memoirs of dissatisfied women and the meaningless agglomerations of anecdotes that feminists so often mistake for argument. We may dismiss accounts of exceptional women, for at issue is what is true of men and women on the whole. We may dismiss the extensive catalogue of books and articles forever demonstrating what no one denies: that men occupy more positions of power than women, that society judges male philandering less harshly than female, that popular films and literature have seldom shown women as leaders. The question is *why* these things are so.

The innate similarity of the sexes is sometimes supported by catchy but dubious analogies. In attempting to meet the worry that an army with women in combat-support positions would be at a disadvantage, a recent federal court decision ruling all-male draft registration unconstitutional states:

> Oriental men are also significantly lighter and shorter than Caucasians on the average, but this in no way precludes their use in the military, nor has it precluded various Asian nations from fielding very effective fighting forces.

Ignored here is the simple fact that those effective Oriental armies have been composed of Oriental *men*, who are indeed smaller and lighter than Occidental men, but pound for pound much stronger and tougher than women. (The U.S. Army has had to eliminate its chin-up requirement for recruits, since females cannot do chin-ups.) And quite apart from the matter of physical strength, the decision makes no effort to show that women, Oriental or Occidental, are as aggressive or physically courageous as men. All the evidence—the experience of Israel in the first Arab war, and Russia and Germany in World War II—is negative. Yet it remains almost a reflex to dismiss the greater aggressiveness of men as socially caused. Here is Dr. Estelle Ramey:

> As an endocrinologist, I think virtually all the differences in male and female behavior are culturally, not hormonally, determined. . . . It is said, for instance, that men are innately more aggressive than women. But conditioning, not sex hormones, makes them that way. Anyone seeing women at a bargain-basement sale—where aggression is viewed as appropriate—sees aggression that would make Attila the Hun turn pale.

It is hard to take this analogy seriously but harder to find anything more trenchant in the literature. Is Dr. Ramey suggesting that one woman would put another to the sword over a choice bit of lingerie, and then kill her relatives to avert a blood feud? In general, the most commonly cited examples of female aggressiveness unleashed—intransigence at faculty meetings, clawing up the corporate ladder—uniformly lack the steadfast murderousness that men have exhibited "where aggression is viewed as appropriate." During Rommel's North African campaign, German and English tank crews kept at their posts month after month while watching their comrades literally being blown to bits. No instance of female aggression parallels this, not even the seemingly obligatory inclusion of a female on bombings or kidnappings by leftist terrorists. War may be loathsome, but only males have ever been capable of waging it.

SINCE today's feminism seems able to make people doubt what they have seen confirmed from childhood on, let us proceed to review some scientific evidence for "gender dimorphism." But I want to stress that the principal evidence is what anyone who watches little children can see. Not only are the differences between boys and girls so obvious and uniform as to be clearly innate, each of us has experienced the differences as innate while growing up.

But scientific evidence is wanted, so scientific evidence we shall have. Even this may not silence all feminists, since some have suggested that the results simply show that ordinary scientific method is inadequate for dealing with male and female.* Still, let us posit that *something* can count as evidence for innate gender differences.

There is, first, a large body of work by John Money and other physiologists documenting the effect of hormones on human development. Most people know that much sex-distinctive behavior is triggered by hormones: the sound of a baby's voice, for instance, will release oxytocin in a woman, making it hard for her to resist attending to the baby. But the full story involves more. The male hormone testosterone not only affects postnatal behavior, but also plays a large role in shaping the central nervous system of fetuses. Given that some of the other differences between males and females to be mentioned below involve differences in neural processing, it seems that from the beginning boys and girls are built by their hormones to perceive and behave differently.

In the cognitive domain, R. Darrell Bock and Donald Kolakowski have documented "a pronounced difference in favor of males" in the ability to visualize spatially, the familiar capacity to imagine what three-dimensional objects look like when rotated.† They calculate this difference to be 46 percent genetic in cause. By analyzing the existing statistical literature and their own experiments, they are able to demonstrate in particular

* Thus Judith Long Laws writes: "Among feminist scholars there is some consensus that we have exhausted what normal science has to offer and that the time has come to seek new paradigms" (*American Journal of Sociology*, September 1977).

† "Further Evidence of Sex-Linked Major-Gene Influence on Human Spatial Visualizing Ability," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 25 (January 1973).

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that the ability to visualize spatially occurs in humans exactly as it would if it were determined by a sex-linked recessive gene. As with other sex-linked traits, the correlation for the presence of this ability is especially high between sons and their mothers. What is significant about this latter fact is that it rules out "environmentalist" explanations for the superiority in this area of males, such as, for example, that fathers teach their sons to catch fly balls and handle tools.

An ability to visualize spatially involves an imaginative manipulation of solid objects, and the Bock-Kolakowski results concur nicely with the more behavior-oriented studies of K. Pribram and D. McGuinness.* In double-blind experiments, since duplicated, they have observed that, even as infants, males "tend to be more interested in objects than in people, and are more skilled at gross motor movements." By contrast, female infants respond more readily to the human voice than do male infants. Pribram and McGuinness conclude that the male is a "manipulative animal" and the female a "communicative animal."

These gender differences in spatial abilities become more pronounced as children mature. Nor is this a matter of "culture taking over"; some ingenious experiments with left-handers, whose neural organization is the mirror-image of the usual, show that these sex-associated differences are induced by the now-familiar differences between the cerebral hemispheres.

As a kind of synthetic union of these results, a number of investigators have found that the female brain responds more powerfully to almost any stimulus than does the male brain, a fact which would explain the common-sense observation that women are more "sensitive" than men, and more prone to stress. Similarly, the sex-linkage and high heritability of spatial-visualizing ability offers a non-sociological explanation of the "dominance" of men in painting and certain branches of mathematics. Finally, one might mention the more speculative suggestions of sociobiologists who have proposed interesting "models" in which gender dimorphism is an optimally adaptive evolutionary strategy.†

These studies would be merely suggestive and not conclusive if "sex-role stereotypes" were not the same in every culture. All over the world and at all times, little girls have differed from little boys, and men from women, in just the same ways. Unless one posits a mysterious grapevine or a still more mysterious conspiracy which tells parents everywhere how to condition their children, the conclusion is inescapable that females are born with a greater prepotency to be interested in people (for example) than are males.

Some contemporary feminists do admit the anthropological universality of "sex-role stereotyping," but they seem unable to appreciate how thoroughly it undermines their position. Alice Rossi, for example, dismisses the large number of societies that exhibit conventional gender differences with the remark that "Americans are impressed by large numbers." Others, like the anthropologist Marvin Harris, explain the universality of male dominance by reference to the rugged conditions of early human life, conditions under which the physically stronger male had to be the hunter and the woman the caretaker of the home. Unfortunately, this explanation concedes that men already were more aggressive, for hunting requires such psychological traits as aggressiveness and bravery as well as physical strength. A muscular man who would rather play with children is no help on a mastodon hunt. Moreover, despite the fact that societies seldom preserve non-functional atavisms, role differentiation has remained constant down to our own day, even though the hunt is no longer part of our lives.

The universality of sex-role differentiation shows the theory of stereotyping to be as conceptually confused as it is empirically baseless. As Steven Goldberg, Mary Midgley, and others have pointed out, the theory simply ignores the question of *why* every society has chosen to do things the same way. Why do not at least 50 percent of human societies have tough, aggressive women and giggly, chatty men? A universal conspiracy will not do, and the only other explanation is that whatever conditioning does actually take place tags along after pre-existent bents. More pertinently, such "conditioning" could not have persisted unless it meshed with a prepotency for it. The effort to condition girls to be nurturant would have lapsed long ago if girls were not more susceptible to it than boys. Given the universality of sex-role differentiation, the feminist's "taught" collapses into "innate": it is evidently an *innate* feature of human beings that they will train their male and female offspring differently.

The slogan "human beings have no instincts" can obstruct an appreciation of innate gender differences. This slogan is true enough, for adult humans at least, if "instinct"

* "The Origins of Sensory Bias in the Development of Gender Difference," in M. Bortner, ed., *Cognitive Growth and Development* (1978); see also D. Goleman, "Special Abilities of the Sexes: Do they Begin in the Brain?," *Psychology Today*, November 1978.

† Even sociobiologists well aware of the irreducible differences between the sexes, however, get cold feet when facing feminism. In *The Whisperings Within* (1979), David Barash worries at length that sociobiology may be "sexist," although he attaches no clear meaning to that word. And Edward O. Wilson, after reviewing some of the same evidence cited in this essay, finds some very warm words for a society that uses "quotas and sex-biased education" to achieve complete equality (*On Human Nature*, 1978). At least Wilson recognizes that "the amount of regulation required would certainly place some personal freedoms in jeopardy."

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means a specific, stimulus-bound pattern of behavior. But if "instinct" is allowed to cover larger patterns of motivation, then humans certainly do have instincts. I buy insurance, an Eskimo stores blubber, and a Masai warrior repels an invader, all to protect our families. Naurally, I must learn the ways of my society to know the specific threats my family faces and the steps to meet them. But this does not mean I must *learn* to react if someone threatens my family.

Far greater mischief is done by the use of the term "sex role," a confused phrase which betrays the ideology underlying today's feminism. Aping sociologists, many feminists describe as "roles" any patterns of feeling or behavior they find objectionable. But consider how tendentious such talk is. A role is something you can adopt (by an act of will) and cast off; it is the opposite of behavior that expresses "the real you." And, indeed, many feminists dismiss romantic love, marriage, and all that flows from them as "inauthentic," in the apparent belief that it you strip away all these things you will find the real McCoy, people in their pure "humanness." For Miss Rossi, liberated parents will be "substitutable"; here is a further description by her of the liberated woman:

> Her intellectual aggressiveness as well as her brother's tender sentiments will be welcomed and accepted as *human* characteristics, without the self-questioning doubt of latent homosexuality that troubles many college-age men and women in our era when these qualities are sex-linked.

The same spirit is embodied in the title of Marlo Thomas's children's book *Free to Be You and Me*, Letty Cottin Pogrebin's *Growing Up Free*, and *Ms.* magazine's "Stories for Free Children." Developed character as we know it is perceived as a hindrance to autonomy.

This whole view of persons as neuter monads, to which accidents of personality are arbitrarily fixed, is absurd. We come into the world not as bits of prime matter but as males or females: there is no prior state we are in or could aspire to. Strip away our characteristic feelings and behavior and you will find not persons in their pure essence, but nothing at all. Apart from our genetic endowment —which is already male or female—what *is* the abstract "humanness" we are supposed to become? We are never told, nor could we be.

If anything, it is an even greater error to suppose that the more of our character we could strip away, the freer we would be. Free action *is* action that flows from character; it is action arising from desires we approve of ourselves having. Some desires—compulsive, unwanted, or merely obtrusive —can indeed impede freedom. But it is as foolish to think that we are most free when we are uninfluenced by desire as to think that tennis is at its best when played without a net. "Pure persons" would be wraiths as incapable of freedom as are clouds.

III

Gender differences will emerge in any human social organization. The only way to stifle, or try to stifle, their manifestation in children's perceptions of each other is through a rigid program of exhorting them to disregard their senses. The only way to stifle, or try to stifle, their manifestation in people's working lives is through a rigid program of job quotas. These programs can never be relaxed, for if they are, society will gravitate back to "sex stereotyping." This is why today's feminism, for all its talk of "liberation" and for all its reputation as a liberal movement, is, and must be, profoundly illiberal and must inevitably lead to ever greater degrees of coercion.

Thus in employment—to begin with that area—the maintaining of androgynously "equitable" outcomes has already become a governmental prerogative. In certain cases the government forbids an employer to hire a man over a woman even if the employer believes that a man is better for the task at hand. American courts routinely overturn ostensibly reasonable employment requirements of size and weight because of their "discriminatory impact"—that is, because women cannot meet them. These rulings represent far more than the confusion of an intent to discriminate with unintended differential consequences: they result from taking the identical treatment of the sexes to be an end in itself which overrides utility or workability.

This disregard for common sense has sanctioned limitless foolishness. Ordered by a federal court to hire female state troopers, the New Jersey Highway Patrol undertook an arduous recruiting and training program that produced *two* female troopers. This wasn't enough. The NJHP then made yet more strenuous efforts, offering females more attractive pensions than their male counterparts, and letting female recruits train only with each other, even in hand-to-hand combat—on the apparent assumption that they would only catch female criminals. With all this, only 30 out of 120 trainees graduated. Even so ardent a champion of "affirmative action" as the New York *Times* admitted that this was "expensive" (while quickly adding that the cost was worth it).

Asserting the sameness of men and women while taking steps to make up for the differences is the perfection of Orwellian doublethink. The Post Office employs male and female letter-carriers, but quietly issues smaller bags to females. The Bell system agrees under pressure to hire women as repairmen, but must equip them with special carts with which to carry their heavy tool boxes. This may not be outrageous in and of itself, but consider what it does to the slogan of "equal pay for equal work." In fact, the slogan has had to be changed. Since on the whole women do not do the work of men, it has quickly become "equal pay for work of equal value," no hint being given as to

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how the value of work is to be gauged. Now even this has yielded to "equal pay for work of comparable [i.e. possibly-not-quite-equal] value," and very recent government guidelines speak of "work of substantially equal value."

Massive interference with hiring decisions, however, is as nothing before the next inevitable step. Without changes in the actual *numbers* of women in "nontraditional" jobs, equality would be a hollow victory; therefore hiring quotas must be imposed. It hardly needs to be argued that quotas war with liberty, since even their advocates no longer pretend they are other than coercive. They also war with liberty in subtler ways, by imposing recognizably irrational courses of action. The "repairperson" handcarts mentioned above, for example, have no marginal utility; their cost to the telephone company and ultimately to the consumer is a dead loss which no productive organization would voluntarily incur.

A further related problem will become more pressing as the system of quotas metastasizes through the whole economy. What will happen when there are too few young women to fill the quotas? The Labor Department has ordered that 25 percent of all apprenticeships in skilled trades be given to females. If not enough girls want to be plumbers, will the government then demand the dismissal of male apprentices to maintain the ratio?

Signs of the coming crunch between reality and feminist ideology have already appeared. Forty-two percent of the female volunteers in the Army fail to finish their first stint. There are barely enough female applicants to fill the service-academy quotas. Says the admissions director of West Point: "This doesn't allow us to be as selective as we otherwise would, and that adds to our drop-out problem." For the sake of social order, one hopes that these words are not read by too many well-qualified males who have been refused admission to West Point.

The demand for greater participation by women in the "occupational system" obviously applies to elected office as well, and an irresistible extension of feminist equity will be electoral quotas. Such a reform has indeed already been proposed, and in some ways adopted. A few years ago the French Minister for Women's Affairs called for a law requiring that 25 percent of all candidates in any election be female. In this country, the Democratic party has imposed a quite strict 50-50 quota system on most of its internal workings. An ultimate disruption of the right to seek elected office seems unavoidable. If men and women are by nature equally likely to want positions of high prestige, then the persistence of more men than women who want such positions can in the eyes of present-day feminists *only* mean that some sort of discrimination is at work, discrimination that cannot be allowed to run its course.

THE second major front on which the contemporary feminist must keep a coercive watch is education. Simply showing children the world and letting them draw their own conclusions from it is unacceptable. Thus Miss Rossi advocates doing away with "class excursions into the community . . . to introduce American children to building, construction, airports, or zoos," because "going out into the community in this way, youngsters would observe men and women in their present occupational roles." A major *point* of education must be the conscious inculcation of the androgynous ideal through "having children see and hear a woman scientist or doctor; a man dancer or artist; both women and men who are business executives, writers, and architects."

Once again the government has gotten into the act; not long ago Senator S. I. Hayakawa complained to Congress that an HEW committee was reviewing children's books for "sexism," on the grounds that schoolbooks should present reality "not as it is or was, but as it will be." Schools that use books showing an insufficient number of lady truckdrivers are to be denied federal funds, and subjected to other sorts of harassment. Publishers have also been recruited: McGraw-Hill, Macmillan, and other publishing houses have instructed their textbook authors not to use the word "housewife," to be sure to have plenty of female doctors, etc.

Today's feminist seems to view educational reform as nothing but a competition between two kinds of brainwashing. Conventional education is indoctrination of one sort, feminist reeducation indoctrination of another sort—the only question is, who gets to do the indoctrinating? This, of course, requires a redefinition of indoctrination, at least of the bad old kind, to include any transmission of the basic values of society, however objectively or even unintentionally they may be conveyed. Reviewing a collection of essays on education, Jane Martin writes:

> While some of us no doubt have been intentionally indoctrinated, most of the indoctrination we receive—into racism, sexism, capitalism, for example—is simply not a deliberate activity of someone wanting us to develop unshakable beliefs and act accordingly.

Any material, presented in whatever good faith, from which children can infer that boys and girls differ, is therefore indoctrination. This is how a feminist comes to view the preponderance of men in history books—not as an inevitable reflection of the fact that men have shaped military, political, scientific, and intellectual history, but as another obnoxious example of "sex stereotyping."

Does it need to be established that indoctrination is the *conscious* and *intentional* inculcation of specific beliefs by the selective manipulation of

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evidence? Naturally, any viable culture will transmit its basic values through its pedagogy. But those values tend to be inseparable from the subjects studied, not lessons anyone makes a point of giving. Yet perhaps it is not surprising that the new feminist approach to education implicitly repudiates any idea of objectivity, since it is itself the very essence of indoctrination.

Propaganda in education is harmful enough when it works; what is especially disturbing about feminist propaganda is that it won't work. You can teach girls to change a fuse, and boys to cook, and you can force them to play baseball together, but you can't make them think they are the same, or that Mommy and Daddy are "substitutable." The ominous implication is that reforms officially designed to wither away after the first androgynous generation will have to be retained as "stereotyping" persists. Vigilance will have to be enhanced, supervision of children made closer. Ever more female scientists and male dancers will have to be trotted out. And what shall be done when children notice that even though there are females in police uniforms, it is always the police*men* who subdue violent criminals?

A "pilot-project" course recently introduced in a New York City public school may offer a glimpse of the future. The course material follows scrupulously neuter-named teenagers ("Jan," "Toni") as they visit airports, observatories, and other standard sites, its point of stress being that some of the girls are "assertive" and some of the boys "sensitive." This is achieved by making it very difficult for the reader to tell who is male and who is female. Now all of this is very distracting, and no class is likely to learn very much about airports or observatories from it. But that is all right, since the course is not intended to communicate knowledge or critical skill. The group's adventures are, and are meant to be, only pegs on which to hang the message that "male" and "female" is an unimportant distinction.

IT IS tempting to think that feminism in its latest version will collide with human nature once too often and then just go away. A collective cry of "enough" will arise and, magically, girls will no longer be made to feel foolish about wanting children, men will no longer have to worry about "offending" their dates, and freedom and rationality will return to the occupational marketplace. This hope might seem to be bolstered by the failure of egalitarian zealotry in Sweden, Israel, and Russia to alter the basic structure of society. Unfortunately, such hope is undermined by the extent to which feminist ideology has already won the day in the United States. No teacher or public speaker dares use "he." Critics must apologize before praising books, movies, or ideas that deviate from the party line. Feminist doctrine now shapes to an unprecedented degree the rights and duties that govern institutional and social life. Once in place, hiring quotas, textbook censorship, court jurisdiction over private association, and all the other travesties of liberalism to which Americans have become numb are likely to stay in place, long after they will clearly be seen to have failed to achieve the unachievable.

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Lies About the Holocaust

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

HISTORIANS are always engaged in reinterpreting the past. They do so sometimes on the basis of newly found documentary sources, sometimes by reconsidering the known data from a different political position, or by taking into account a different time span, or by employing a new methodology. Every historical subject has undergone revision as each new generation rewrites the history of the past in the light of its own perspectives and values. But the *term* "revisionism" has applied specifically to dissident positions which are at variance with mainstream history on several subjects from the Civil War on. Three of these subjects have been politicized beyond the limits of historical truth—World War I, World War II, and the cold war (and there is a new subject, the war in Vietnam, now in the making).

In these three instances, revisionists, more ideological than academic in their approach, have tried to refute the prevailing views as to who was to blame for the outbreak of war. Using—and sometimes abusing—historical data, World War I revisionists have tried to prove that Germany was not to blame, or was less to blame than England. World War II revisionists have traveled the same route, picturing Franklin D. Roosevelt as the arch-villain. Cold-war revisionists have blamed the United States and absolved the Soviet Union for having initiated the cold war.

World War I revisionism was launched late in the 1920's with Sidney B. Fay's *The Origins of the World War*, which gave some historical dignity to what was more often a political and ideological issue. On the Right, conservatives and isolationists blamed England for the war and whitewashed Germany. On the Left, the Communists and their splinter groups attributed the origins of the war to the conspiratorial manipulations of the munitions-makers and the financiers. In Germany itself, the historical debate continued from the end of World War I until long past the end of World War II, but by now it would seem to have been put to rest by Fritz Fischer's definitive work, *Germany's War Aims in the First World War.**

As for World War II, the universal revulsion against the Third Reich and the open record of its belligerency did not create a hospitable climate for revisionism. Even in postwar Germany, where diehard Nazis continued to believe in the cause, they nevertheless did not dare to defend the Third Reich openly. The first—and still the only—revisionist work on World War II by a reputable historian was A.J.P. Taylor's mischievous book, *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961).† There Taylor argued that Hitler had not planned a general war, and that the conflict, far from being premeditated, was "a mistake, the result on both sides of diplomatic blunders." Still, though Hitler was like other statesmen of his time in the conduct of his diplomatic affairs, Taylor explicitly declared that he outdid them all "in wicked deeds."

Historians everywhere roundly attacked Taylor for the book's conceptual perversity and its methodological flaws, but his book soon became the banner under which a swarm of Nazi apologists, cranks, and anti-Semites rallied. In twenty years' time, indeed, the allegations advanced by Taylor would come to appear mild and innocuous, for by 1980 one would find it being argued by so-called revisionists not only that Hitler's Germany was not to blame for World War II, but that the murder of six million European Jews by the Nazis had never taken place, that the Holocaust was a hoax invented by the Jews. Most shocking of all, these gross and malicious falsifications, far from being attacked and repudiated, have gained a respectful hearing in academic historical institutions in the United States.

IN THE same year that Taylor's book was published, 1961, a revisionist work appeared in Germany, written by an American, David L. Hoggan. The book had originated as a Harvard doctoral dissertation done in 1948, but it was revised, expanded, and Nazified in the ensuing years. Unable

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*First published in Germany in 1961. The English version appeared in 1967 (Norton).

† See G.F. Hudson, "An Apologia for Adolf Hitler," COMMENTARY, February 1962.

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to find an American or a bona-fide German publisher, Hoggan gave his manuscript to a known Nazi publisher.*

Hoggan's dissertation, according to one of his Harvard advisers, had been "no more than a solid, conscientious piece of work, critical of Polish and British policies in 1939, but not beyond what the evidence would tolerate." Thirteen years later, as published, it had turned into an apologia for Nazi Germany in which the English were portrayed as warmongers, the Poles as the real provokers of the war, and Hitler as the angel of peace. (The book also contained a short section on the Jews, arguing that from 1933 to 1938 the Third Reich treated its Jews more generously than Poland had.)

To support his outrageous claims, Hoggan tampered with sources, distorting and misreading those that did not fit his theories and prejudices, glossing over those that conflicted with them, and altogether ignoring those that actually confuted them. Nor, according to the president of the Association of German Historians, did he shrink from forgery.† One noted German historian summed up Hoggan's work as follows: "Rarely have so many inane and unwarranted theses, allegations, and 'conclusions' . . . been crammed into a volume written under the guise of history."

How had a once "solid, conscientious piece of work" metamorphosed into this rubbish of Nazi apologetics? The credit for the reverse alchemy belongs to the late Harry Elmer Barnes, presumptive doyen of American isolationist historians, guru to fledgling libertarians, and patron saint of neo-Nazi cranks and crackpots in search of academic legitimacy.

HARRY ELMER BARNES (1889-1968) was an American historian and sociologist of wide-ranging interests and knowledge, whose career as a professor and then as a journalist was aborted by his contentiousness and his cavalier disregard not only for accuracy but also for truth. He produced no original scholarly work, but synthesized information from his vast reading in a series of prolix and repetitious works on the history of Western civilization. By his own account, however, the "subject of war responsibility" occupied more of his time than any other theme.

In the 1920's Barnes became a World War I revisionist and was soon possessed by the idea that "vested political and historical interests" were behind the "official" accounts of Germany's responsibility for the outbreak of the war. The rabid energy which this notion provoked in him sustained Barnes as a revisionist into the period of World War II. As early as 1937, already a fanatical Roosevelt-hater, he described himself as a "noninterventionist." His rage against Roosevelt became still more intensified after Pearl Harbor—for which Barnes held Roosevelt responsible—and America's entry into the war in 1941.

Barnes's obsessions with warmongering conspiracies in government and in the historical profession held him in thrall until the end of his life. His writing grew ever more shrill, irresponsible, and irrational. (Finding few outlets to publish his polemical pieces, he felt compelled to have them privately printed.) People who had once held him in regard ceased to pay heed as he grew progressively paranoid, seeing sinister plots and powerful enemies everywhere. He began to write about the "historical blackout," that is, about a conspiracy to prevent him from publicizing his isolationist views. Here is a sample from one of the earlier articles:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the American *Smearbund, operating through* newspaper editors and columnists, "hatchet-men" book reviewers, radio commentators, pressure-group intrigue and espionage, and academic pressures and fears, has accomplished about as much in the way of intimidating honest intellectuals in this country as Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, the Gestapo, and concentration camps were able to do in Nazi Germany.**

By now a calcified isolationist, Barnes opposed America's involvement in Korea and soon found himself in the company not only of right-wing isolationists, ex-America Firsters, and Nazi apologists, but also of radical libertarians devoted to laissez-faire in the economy, noninterference by the state in domestic affairs, and isolationism (nonintervention) in foreign affairs. In this period Barnes became acquainted with one James J. Martin and wrote an introduction to Martin's oddball history of "individualist anarchism," published by the Libertarian Book Club in New York. It was at this time that Barnes became interested in Hoggan's dissertation and over the years guided him straight into Nazi apologetics.

As the years progressed, Barnes's hold on political reality continued to slip. He had begun his iso-

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* *Der erzwungene Krieg: Die Ursachen und Urheber des 2. Weltkriegs* ("The Imposed War: The Origins and Originators of World War II"), translated from the English by M.E. Narjes and H. Grabert (Verlag der Deutschen Hochschullehrer-Zeitung, 1961); reviewed by Gerhard L. Weinberg in the *American Historical Review*, 68, 1 (October 1962), pp. 104-105. Weinberg's sharply critical review, noting the publisher's Nazi connections, provoked angry letters from Hoggan and his supporters. Their false assertions eventually elicited letters from several eminent American historians who wished to dissociate themselves from Hoggan's work.

† Helmut Krausnick, director of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, raised the charge of forgery in a foreword to Hermann Graml's lengthy critique of Hoggan, published in *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, August 1963.

** "Revisionism and the Historical Blackout," which appeared originally as the lead article in *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (1953), a massive compendium which Barnes edited and privately financed. The book was filled with isolationist and anti-Roosevelt material.

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lationist-revisionist career by whitewashing Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany and ended up by whitewashing Hitler's. In 1962 Barnes already doubted that the Third Reich had committed any atrocities or murder. In a privately printed pamphlet, *Blasting the Historical Blackout*, which praised A.J.P. Taylor's book, if with some reservations (he thought Hoggan's was better), Barnes alluded to what he called the "alleged wartime crimes of Germany": "Even assuming that all the charges ever made against the Nazis by anybody of reasonable sanity and responsibility are true, the Allies do not come off much, if any, better." Then, with the shamelessness of a habitual liar, he charged that the sufferings of the Germans who had been expelled from Czech and Polish border areas after World War II and returned to Germany were "obviously far more hideous and prolonged than those of the Jews said to have been exterminated in great numbers by the Nazis."

Four years later, in 1966, in another rambling and paranoid piece, "Revisionism: A Key to Peace," published in a short-lived libertarian journal, Barnes for all practical purposes denied that Hitler's Germany had committed mass murder. The following sentence is an elaboration of the one I quoted earlier:

> Even if one were to accept the most extreme and exaggerated indictment of Hitler and the National Socialists for their activities after 1939 made by anybody fit to remain outside a mental hospital, it is almost alarmingly easy to demonstrate that the atrocities of the Allies in the same period were more numerous as to victims and were carried out for the most part by methods more brutal and painful than alleged extermination in gas ovens.

In those days, even the neo-Nazis in Germany were circumspect in their journal, *Nation Europa* (which also published Barnes's articles), not daring to deny the facts of mass murder altogether but simply minimizing them. Only a certain Paul Rassinier in France was sufficiently divorced from reality to deny that the Third Reich had murdered the Jews.

RASSINIER, once a Communist, then a socialist, had been interned in Buchenwald during the war, and afterward flipflopped into a rabid anti-Semite. In 1949 he published a book claiming the atrocities committed in the Nazi camps had been grossly exaggerated by the survivors. If any Jews had been murdered, Rassinier said, it was the Jewish *kapos* in the camps who had killed them. The book was widely denounced in France. Later Rassinier sued a newspaper editor for having called him a fascist; he was, he insisted, an anarchist. But the Paris court ruled against Rassinier on the ground that his book expressed ideas "identical with those proclaimed by the neo-Nazis."

In 1964 Rassinier wrote another book, *Le Drame des Juifs Européens*, an incoherent assemblage of arguments rehashed from the storehouse of anti-Semitic writings. Rassinier had one new wrinkle: arithmomania. He came up with the weird calculation that precisely 4,416,108 of the six million Jews said to have been murdered were actually alive and that the rest had probably not been killed by the Germans anyway. Around this time Barnes and Rassinier met, the rendezvous having been arranged by Mabel Narjes of Hamburg, co-translator of Hoggan's *Der erzwungene Krieg*.

Rassinier and Barnes obviously had much in common; Barnes undertook to translate Rassinier's book into English,* and also reviewed Rassinier for the American public, or at least for those most likely to be interested—the readers of the *American Mercury*. (Founded as an iconoclastic journal in 1924 by H.L. Mencken, the *American Mercury* deteriorated after Mencken's resignation in 1933 and eventually became just an anti-Semitic rag.) Here is Barnes at his unpitiable worst:

> . . . the courageous author [Rassinier] lays the chief blame for misrepresentation on those whom we must call the swindlers of the crematoria, the Israeli politicians who derive billions of marks from nonexistent, mythical, and imaginary cadavers, whose numbers have been reckoned in an unusually distorted and dishonest manner.†

Rassinier died in 1967 and Barnes a year later, but their fanaticism continued to inspire others in their quest for legitimacy. In 1969, a 119-page book, *The Myth of the Six Million*, by "Anonymous," appeared, with an introduction paying tribute to Barnes as "one of America's greatest historians." The introduction was written pseudonymously by Willis A. Carto, head of Liberty Lobby, the best financed anti-Semitic organization in the United States, which operates out of Washington, D. C. *The Myth of the Six Million* was published by a Liberty Lobby subsidiary, Noontide Press. (*American Mercury* is also part of the interlocking network funded by Liberty Lobby.)

In his introduction, Carto explained that "Anonymous" was a college professor who wished to protect his standing in the academic community by hiding his identity. It appears likely that the author was none other than David L. Hoggan, for in 1969 he sued Noontide Press for damages, claiming authorship of *The Myth of the Six Million*. The litigation dragged on until 1973, when

* *The Drama of the European Jews*, 1975. It was dedicated to "James J. Martin & the late Harry Elmer Barnes: Pioneers in Revisionist History." The publisher was an anti-Semitic outfit in Silver Spring, Maryland; it was distributed also by Liberty Bell Publications, run by a former Nazi working out of Reedy, West Virginia.

† "Zionist Fraud," reprinted in an appendix to *The Myth of the Six Million*, about which more below.

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the plaintiff withdrew his complaint. (Perhaps Carto settled out of court.) In 1974 a new edition of *The Myth of the Six Million* appeared, still authored by "Anonymous."

The Myth of the Six Million undertook to disprove all the evidence of the murder of the European Jews and to discredit all eyewitness testimony, including that of Rudolf Hoess, SS commandant at Auschwitz, and Kurt Gerstein, the SS officer who delivered the poison gas to Belzec and Treblinka. The author of *The Myth of the Six Million* did much the same thing that the author of *Der erzwungene Krieg* had done: distorting and faking some sources, suppressing others, and inventing still others. One example will suffice, as it is an item that turns up repeatedly in anti-Semitic tracts.

Benedikt Kautsky, an Austrian socialist, had been interned in Buchenwald and was later a slave laborer in Auschwitz. In his memoirs, *Teufel und Verdammte*, Kautsky wrote:

> I should now like briefly to refer to the gas chambers. Though I did not see them myself, they have been described to me by so many trustworthy people that I have no hesitation in reproducing their testimony.

The neo-Nazis cite Kautsky, with the appropriate bibliographical references including the correct page number, but falsify the passage so that he appears to corroborate their claim that there were no gas chambers.

We may not think much of Hoggan's anonymous scribbling, but the booklet was well received in his circles. In England a pamphlet, *Did the Six Million Really Die?*, which drew heavily upon *The Myth of the Six Million*, was put forward as a historical work, published by a so-called Historical Review Press in Surrey; the author was advertised as one Richard E. Harwood, "a specialist in political and diplomatic aspects of the Second World War" who was "with the University of London." Actually he was Richard Verrall, editor of *Spearhead* magazine, unofficial organ of the National Front, an English racist group.

By now the neo-Nazis had regularly begun to exploit terms like "historical review" and "revisionism" in an effort to get attention in respectable circles. In New York a splinter group of the pro-Nazi German-American National Congress hit on the idea of a Revisionist Press to publish pseudoscholarly materials. They concealed their identity behind a post-office box number first in Brooklyn, then in Rochelle Park, New Jersey. In 1973 this Revisionist Press reprinted as a small book Barnes's paranoid essay, "Revisionism: A Key to Peace," from which I quoted earlier.

The neo-Nazi bid for academic reputability took a great leap forward when word got around that a professor at Northwestern University named Arthur R. Butz had published a book called *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, the hoax being the "Holocaust legend." Butz's book, published in 1976 by the Historical Review Press in Surrey—Harwood/Verrall's publisher—confidently argued that the Jews of Europe had not been "exterminated and that there was no German attempt to exterminate them." Butz—an associate professor of electrical engineering and computer sciences—was convinced that all the Jews said to have been murdered were still alive and he undertook to prove it, his expertise in computers no doubt standing him in good stead.

In his review of the assorted neo-Nazi writings on this subject, Butz gave good grades only to Rassinier, though he did not find him entirely accurate or reliable. Butz dismissed *The Myth of the Six Million* as "terrible," but considered Harwood's *Did the Six Million Really Die?* "quite good" (perhaps because the two authors shared the same publisher). As examples of "leading extermination mythologists," Butz lumped together Gerald Reitlinger (*The Final Solution*), Raul Hilberg (*The Destruction of the European Jews*), and me (*The War Against the Jews*).

The news of Butz's extracurricular career as an anti-Semitic scholar percolated from England back to Northwestern, and finally an account in the New York *Times* in late January 1977 raised Butz to national notoriety. His presence at Northwestern embarrassed the university, especially as its Jewish contributors threatened to withhold their financial support. The faculty, for its part, held firmly to the principle of academic freedom and the right of tenure. (Nowadays teaching at a university appears to be widely considered a fundamental civil right, like free speech or the right to bear arms.)

To demonstrate that Northwestern did not approve of Butz's views, the university administration prompted its history department to organize a series of lectures which would confirm that six million European Jews had indeed been murdered. These lectures, delivered by three Jews and a philo-Semite, were published in a booklet, *The Dimensions of the Holocaust* (1977), and distributed to show that the university stood foursquare on the side of honor and decency. As one of the four lecturers at Northwestern, I argued in private with some members of the faculty and the administration that the university's response was inadequate, for it seemed to me that they regarded the affair merely as an unfortunate incident affecting Jewish sensibilities. In fact, in their public statements the university's president and provost had treated the Butz scandal as a Jewish family sorrow, "a contemptible insult to the dead and the bereaved." No one at this great center of learning seemed to regard Butz's absurdities as an offense against historical truth, a matter supposedly of

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concern to an intellectual and academic community.

That same year, 1977, *Hitler's War* by David Irving came out.* Irving, an English journalist with strong German sympathies and a record of disregard for verity or verification, argued in this book that the murder of the European Jews—whose historicity he did not deny—was Himmler's doing, and that Hitler was in fact innocent of those terrible deeds. Because Irving did not dispute the historical reality that the Jews were murdered, his work found no acceptance in the anti-Semitic canon.

Butz was the one who became a celebrity, even lecturing before an audience brought together by remnant supporters of the late Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (a Nazi collaborator). His book has been distributed in the United States by Carto's Noontide Press and by practically every other enterprising anti-Semitic group. One of Butz's "academic" sponsors has been Dr. Austin J. App, who used to teach English at LaSalle College in Philadelphia and claims to have been associated with Barnes. App's Nazi sympathies and anti-Semitic activities date back to the early 1940's; a prolific pamphleteer, he himself is the author of a 39-page effusion, *The Six Million Swindle*, which he has peddled along with the collected works of Butz, Harwood, and Hoggan.

In Germany, Udo Walendy, a Nazi in good standing from the old days, translated Butz (*Der Jahrhundert Betrug*) and published his version through a "revisionist" press which he operates. Walendy has his own wrinkle: he claims that the photographs of barely living camp inmates or of dead and rotted cadavers are "fake atrocity photographs."

France has had its equivalent of Butz in the person of Robert Faurisson, who until last year was an associate professor of French literature at the University of Lyon-2. In 1978 Faurisson began to write articles asserting that the "alleged gas chambers and the alleged genocide are one and the same lie . . . which is largely of Zionist origin." Furthermore, said Faurisson, "the participants in this lie . . . distort the purpose and nature of revisionist research." Faurisson's articles created such a furor that the university suspended him, a development which prompted all sorts of "civil libertarians" to come to his defense. Among them was Jean-Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, brother of Danny the Red of the 1968 Paris student riots. Cohn-Bendit, according to Faurisson, wrote to express his support: "Let's fight to destroy those gas chambers which are shown to tourists in the camps where one knows now there hadn't been any at all."† From this country, Noam Chomsky outdid even himself to sign an appeal in defense of Faurisson's civil rights.**

In Australia Butz's book had a profound and unhinging effect on John Bennett, a Melbourne lawyer, for many years secretary of the regional Council for Civil Liberties. Converted by Butz, Bennett distributed about 200 copies of the book and thousands of copies of Faurisson's articles to persons in Australian public life. Early in 1979, Bennett began to speak of the murder of the European Jews as "a gigantic lie" created by "Zionist Holocaust propaganda" to make people support Israel. Several of his sensational letters-to-the-editor were published in leading Australian papers. The subsequent uproar soon brought about his dismissal from the Council for Civil Liberties. In the wake of this unfortunate episode, the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, working together with Melbourne's Jewish community, mounted an exhibit on the Holocaust intended to remind those who had forgotten, or to inform those who never knew, that the Third Reich had undertaken to destroy the European Jews and by 1945 had indeed succeeded.

MEANWHILE, back in the United States, the Revisionist Press in Brooklyn had published a small book called *The Revisionist Historians and German War Guilt*. Its author was Warren B. Morris, Jr., holder of a doctorate from Oklahoma State University for an undistinguished dissertation on a minor 19th-century German diplomat.

The idea for *The Revisionist Historians and German War Guilt*, Morris acknowledged in his preface, came from the Revisionist Press itself and Morris expressed his appreciation also to Austin J. App, author of *The Six Million Swindle*. Morris set himself the task of determining who was right —the "revisionists" or the "traditionalists"—on such matters as the destruction of the European Jews, aspects of Hitler's foreign policy, and the legitimacy of the Nuremberg trials. On the Jews his "revisionists" were Butz, Rassinier, App, and Harwood. (Hoggan was his "revisionist" on Hitler's foreign policy.) The "traditionalists" included Reitlinger, Hilberg, and me. Morris noticed that we were all Jewish, but thought it "only natural" for Jews "to have been in the forefront of Holocaust studies" because "they or their relatives suffered under Nazi persecution of the Jews."

After weighing the findings of Butz and company and comparing them with those of the "traditionalists," Morris reluctantly concluded that "Rassinier, Butz, App, Harwood, and other revisionists have failed to discredit the traditional accounts of the Nazi efforts to exterminate the

* Reviewed in COMMENTARY, September 1977.

† Faurisson, in his "Right of Reply," *Le Monde*, March 29, 1979.

** In a letter to me, September 18, 1980, Chomsky expressed complete agnosticism on the subject of whether or not Faurisson's views were "horrendous," saying that he was not sufficiently involved in the issue to pursue or evaluate it.

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Jews." *Ipse dixit.* Yet Morris still rendered their due to the Revisionist Press and his friend Dr. App. Even if the "revisionists" had failed "to prove their most important arguments," he wrote, "by forcing historians to reconsider their evaluation of Nazi policy toward the Jews," they have "indeed done a very valuable service to scholarship."

In one of the more astonishing episodes of the story being unfolded here, the June 1980 issue of the *American Historical Review*, the journal of the American Historical Association, the preeminent professional organization of American historians, published a respectful review of Morris's book.* How this sly attempt to give academic legitimacy to the outpourings of a variety of neo-Nazis and anti-Semites came to be offered for review in the first place, and how it came to be assigned for review two years after its publication, is a bit of a mystery. One might have thought that a knowledgeable book-review editor would promptly have seen its worthlessness and that a competent historian would have disdained to review it. (The book is a 141-page reproduction of a sloppy typescript, priced at $44.95.) As to the review itself, it was "agnostic" and impartial to the point of vacancy.

As the ranks of the pseudoscholars swelled, Willis Carto hit on the idea of creating an Institute of Historical Review, using the resources of Liberty Lobby and its network. In 1979 this Institute convoked a "Revisionist Convention" on the Northrup College campus in Los Angeles. Papers were read by Butz, Faurisson, App, and Walendy, arguing that there had been no Holocaust and no gas chambers; that all the camp photographs had been faked; that the Jews (alas) were still alive. The assemblage also heard speeches by Carto, John Bennett (who came all the way from Melbourne), and Devin Garrity, president of the right-wing publishing house, Devin-Adair.

The convention was dedicated to the memory of Harry Elmer Barnes; its opening speaker was none other than James J. Martin, Barnes's protege from the 1950's. In 1964 Martin had produced a two-volume, 1337-page compendium, published by Devin-Adair, which charged that between 1931 and 1941 American liberals had undergone a conspiratorial changeover from peace advocacy to war advocacy. (A reviewer summed up this "goulash of quotation, summary, and editorial comment" as "a scholarly disaster.") Now Martin has inherited Barnes's laurels and has been installed in the neo-Nazi pantheon as the "dean of historical revisionist scholars." He is the director of Ralph Myles Publishers, a firm which publishes revisionist books, some more fascist than academic. He also operates in the more rarefied atmosphere of the libertarians, where Right and Left sometimes bed together even if they don't always see eye to eye. Cato Institute, a libertarian outfit based in San Francisco, subsidized by the Koch Foundation (which supports the Libertarian party), recently published a collection of Barnes's more paranoid essays with a foreword by Martin.†

At the 1979 revisionist convention, Carto announced that in 1980 the Institute of Historical Review would launch a quarterly, *Journal of Historical Review*. It was delivered as promised, with a lead article by Butz and other pieces by Faurisson, App, Walendy, and their ilk. A second issue followed, with similar contents, and a second convention was held last August at Pomona College, Claremont, California, this one dedicated to Rassinier's memory. Mabel Narjes, Hoggan's translator, who had brought Barnes and Rassinier together many years before, was flown over from Hamburg to speak about that historic encounter. Martin read a paper summarizing his forthcoming book on genocide, the publication of which one can await only with anxiety.

DOES any of this matter? Would any sensible and decent person be taken in by the absurd and malicious lie that Hitler's Germany never murdered six million Jews? Who would believe the monstrous falsehood that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz? As it turns out, these are not just rhetorical questions.

While I was writing this article, a man associated with the Larry King radio show, a national network talk program, called to ask if I would debate with Faurisson. When I replied indignantly that Faurisson should not be provided with a platform for his monomania, the man mildly inquired why I was against discussing "controversial" matters on the radio. I in turn asked *him* if he thought the murder of the European Jews was a "controversial" matter. Had it not been established to his satisfaction as a historical fact? "I don't know," he answered. "I wasn't around at the time. I'm only thirty years old."

Perhaps it is not so hard after all to befuddle the ignorant, especially on Jewish matters, to which they are, at best, indifferent. Yet would Americans give a respectful hearing to someone who insisted that slavery had never existed in the United States, that blacks invented the story in order to get preferential treatment and federal aid, or that blacks had actually owned all the plantations? Somehow one doubts it.

Nor is it only the ignorant and the ill-informed who are involved here. The established academic and historical institutions of the United States, who should be the first to safeguard the truth of the past as it happened, have instead given respectful consideration to the most blatant falsifica-

* The review was written by Birdsall Scrymser Viault, of Winthrop College.

† *Revisionism: A Key to Peace and Other Essays*, Cato Paper No. 12, 1980.

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tions of the recent past. The mindless review of Morris's tract in the *American Historical Review* is just one egregious example. Another is the response of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) to the *Journal of Historical Review*, the new quarterly of the "revisionists."

In the spring of 1980, each of the 12,000 members of the OAH received a complimentary copy of the inaugural issue of the *Journal*. A half-minute perusal should have sufficed to show that it was nothing more than a potpourri of anti-Semitic propaganda camouflaged to look like a learned journal. Some OAH members, in fact, protested the sale of the OAH membership list to neo-Nazis; others felt that, in the interests of intellectual freedom, the mailing list should be available to all. The OAH executive secretary responded to this division of opinion with irreproachable objectivity; he proposed to provide his Executive Board with "an analysis of the *JHR* as a historical publication," which analysis to "be developed by well-qualified historians," who would "focus on the credentials of the contributors and the use of evidence." Then, well-armed with a well-grounded analysis of this rubbish by well-qualified historians, the OAH's Executive Board would duly report to its members.*

Report what, is not quite clear. Perhaps that the neo-Nazis did not have proper academic credentials, or that they failed to use primary sources? Again one wonders: would the OAH have reacted the same way to a pseudoscholarly journal pushing KKK propaganda?

One turns with relief to the French historians. At the time of the Faurisson affair, thirty-four of France's leading historians issued a declaration attesting to the historical truth of the Holocaust and protesting the Nazi attempt to erase the past.† The concluding paragraph of the declaration could well serve as a guide to American historians:

> Everyone is free to interpret a phenomenon like the Hitlerite genocide according to his own philosophy. Everyone is free to compare it with other enterprises of murder committed earlier, at the same time, later. Everyone is free to offer such or such kind of explanation; everyone is free, to the limit, to imagine or to dream that these monstrous deeds did not take place. Unfortunately they did take place and no one can deny their existence without committing an outrage on the truth. It is not necessary to ask how *technically* such mass murder was possible. It was technically possible, seeing that it took place. That is the required point of departure of every historical inquiry on this subject. This truth it behooves us to remember in simple terms: there is not and there cannot be a debate about the existence of the gas chambers.

ABOUT fifty years ago the great Dutch historian Johan Huizinga remarked that the critical historical faculty required three elements: "Common sense, practice, and above all a historical sense, a high form of that discrimination by which a connoisseur knows a true work of art from a false one." Huizinga believed that a higher level of historical discrimination now prevailed among educated persons than had in the past, and that trained historians had acquired greater sophistication in using historical evidence. Consequently, he concluded, "only the untrained are inclined now to accept flagrantly false versions." On the record presented here, his optimism about the historical profession was premature.

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* "Journal of Historical Review," *OAH Newsletter*, 8, 1 (July 1980), pp. 14-15.

† The full text of the declaration, with a list of all its signatories, appeared in *Le Monde*, February 21, 1979.

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How to Restrain the Soviets

Adam B. Ulam

For those who, in the wake of Afghanistan and Poland, seek to assess the present and future course of Soviet policy, there ought to be much room for thought in what might be described as the prenatal history of the Soviet state. The Bolsheviks triumphed in 1917 not so much on account of their own strength, wiles, or popularity as because of the supineness and divisions among their democratic opponents. And when the October coup, which Lenin's party had been preparing virtually in the open, actually took place, the democratic Left would still not be stirred into any concrete countermeasures; nor for that matter did it evidence any undue anxiety about the future of Russia and its freedom.

True, the progressive circles denounced the Bolsheviks' action as execrable and a lamentable lapse from what socialism and the revolutionary tradition in general had always stood for. By the same token it was widely believed that in the long run the madcap venture of October 25 was bound to prove futile and self-defeating. No practicing socialist or liberal thought it conceivable that in this 20th century the vast conglomeration of nations which was Russia could be ruled by force, less still that the country would tolerate one-party dictatorship.

Many in the same circles were also comforted by the thought that while Lenin himself was obviously a unique and frightening phenomenon, there were people in the Bolshevik high command —today we would call them doves—whose common sense and moderation would soon force their erring leader and party back onto the path of social-democratic virtue. And who could believe that the working class, having overthrown one type of autocracy, would meekly submit to another one? To oppose the Bolsheviks through means other than oratory would thus play into the hands of reaction. Those who did so would become unwitting allies of forces hostile to democracy and social justice, a stand which, apart from its inherent immorality, was bound to make the regime more suspicious and repressive and to weaken the influence of moderates in its councils. It behooved the Russian democrat to be patient—i.e., passive—and to remember that force alone could not solve the burning social and economic problems of the country. Given time, the laws of history must reassert themselves and chastise the Bolshevik usurpers.

As the Communist regime continued to defy the alleged laws of history by growing in strength and ferocity, this attitude of the Russian intelligentsia of the revolutionary period was copied and became quite fashionable within liberal opinion in the West. The Soviet system was recognized as being repressive and yet in the long run it had to change for the better; in fact, there were clear signs of such a change as Russian society was becoming modernized and industrialized. There was the Soviet constitution of 1936 (realistic Western observers acknowledged that for the moment it did not have much relevance to Stalin's Russia, but certainly its impressive array of individual rights and democratic procedures would eventually have a beneficial effect on the minds of the rulers and the ruled). The wartime partnership among the USSR, the U.S., and Britain, it was also fondly and widely believed, would lead to the dispelling, or at least lessening, of the fear of the capitalist West—a fear not altogether unjustified in the past and probably the main reason the regime had felt it had to be so harsh with its own people and so unpleasantly abusive about the Western democracies.

Since World War II, Soviet society has undergone great changes. The USSR today is an industrial as well as a military superpower, its nuclear armament greater than that of the United States. Yet despite these developments, which according to the old scenario should have dispelled the Soviets' fears and sense of inferiority and hence curtailed their propensity for international mischief-making, the USSR has not abated but rather expanded its efforts to undercut the West's security and vital interests in virtually every corner of the globe. Western imperialism has passed into history, but the Soviet Union has continued and enhanced its

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expansionist policies, has used and stands ready to use again armed force to prevent any country in the "socialist camp" from achieving a modicum of internal democracy. With no external threat visible (and China cannot become such for at least a generation), the USSR has steadily increased its military budget and the size of its conventional and nuclear forces.

It is also clear that in planning and executing such policies the Soviet leaders have been guided by a realistic assessment of the strength and firmness of Western resolve, and not by some irrational fears and ideological obsessions of their own. As Churchill observed a long time ago, they have sought not war but the fruits of a victorious war, and they have proceeded to reap them whenever discord among the democracies and their unwillingness or inability to resist Soviet usurpation have offered the Soviets the chance of a new conquest or of expanding their influence at little or no risk.

On the other hand, whenever the Kremlin has clearly perceived that the other side was both able and determined to resist its imperialist designs, it has pulled back. Its occasional miscalculations—Korea in 1950, the Cuban confrontation of 1962—occurred when the whole pattern of American behavior and official statements prior to the crisis gave the Soviets excellent reasons to believe that the U.S. would react with nothing but diplomatic protests. But when the Soviet leadership becomes convinced that the Western nations are not only strong but united and purposeful, it becomes not only restrained in its foreign policies, but willing to resolve outstanding international issues through negotiations. The closest we have come to *real* détente in Soviet-American relations was in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis. And the momentum for a meaningful rapprochement between the two superpowers would probably have survived Khrushchev's fall had not Vietnam dealt such a punishing blow both to Western unity and to America's self-assurance concerning its role in the world.

As to the additional reason why the Nixon-Brezhnev détente went so sour so quickly, we might adduce the testimony of North Vietnamese General Dong when he explained why his regime felt confident that it could with impunity break the Paris agreements of 1973 and seize the South: "The internal contradictions within the U.S. administration and among U.S. political parties had intensified. The Watergate scandal had seriously affected the entire United States. . . . It faced economic recession, mounting inflation, serious unemployment, and an oil crisis."* The Soviets' advance in nuclear power, and the more than usual confusion attending U.S. foreign and defense policies under the Carter administration, undoubtedly still further reinforced the Politburo's conviction that it could continue with its Cuban gambit in Africa, expand the Soviet role in southern Yemen, and deal in a forthright fashion with Afghanistan—all without risking effective countermeasures from the West.

IT MIGHT appear that the conclusion to be drawn from what has been said here is so self-evident that spelling it out would be embarrassing. But what George Orwell wrote in 1939 must, alas, be applied to much of current American thinking concerning the Soviet Union and the challenge it poses to what remains of the world order: "We have now sunk to a depth at which the restatement of the obvious is the first duty of intelligent men." There are still quite a few intelligent men in government, in the academic community, and in the media whose attitude on the subject is reminiscent of a Menshevik's reaction to the Bolshevik coup in October, or that of a liberal to Stalin's Russia in the 30's: there is nothing to be unduly excited about, the forces of history will take care of the problem.

In the early days of the Carter administration we often heard from its spokesmen that it was both unreasonable and anachronistic to keep worrying about the Soviet Union and Communism, when the real challenge confronting the world was now that of the "North-South dialogue." Such talk did not entirely disappear even after Carter confessed that the Afghan business had taught him more about the USSR than he had learned on the subject during the previous three-and-a-half years of his stewardship of American foreign policy. Indeed, according to what could be described as the indigestion theory of Soviet imperialism, we should look with pity rather than indignation at the Soviets' voracity in acquiring real estate, fresh clients, and satellites. In the long run such greed brings nothing but trouble, as we learned in Vietnam and they are allegedly discovering in Angola and Afghanistan.

The case of Egypt is often cited as another example of how the forces of history obligingly relieve us of the necessity of doing anything each time the USSR tries to establish its foothold in yet another area in the world: seventeen or so years and some billions of rubles after Khrushchev had ensnared Nasser into a close relationship, the Soviets were invited to leave and Sadat is now a cordial friend of the United States. But apart from being an untypical ending in the chronicle of Soviet expansion, the argument misses the point. The liaison with Egypt was the entering wedge of the Soviet Union's penetration of the Middle East. That penetration in turn has been the main cause of the miseries suffered by the whole region, and the danger it poses to world peace. Some of the Soviet Union's voluntary allies may indeed realize after a while the heavy price they have been paying for Mos-

* Quoted in the New York *Times*, April 26, 1976.

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cow's "selfless help," as it is described in the Soviet press, but by that time the damage has usually been done. Another region has been plunged into further turmoil and the prospects for a peaceful and equitable solution of its problems have considerably receded.

In general the notion that "the Russians have their own troubles" has been a deceptive solace to many Americans as they contemplate our own not so splendid condition and the lengthening shadow of the USSR in the world. Surely, with its declining rate of economic growth, faltering agriculture, nationality problems, etc., "The Soviet Union, too, will be compelled to turn inward, all of the external evidence to the contrary, their monstrous armament, their hydrocephalic navy, notwithstanding."* Who, what, it might be asked, will *compel* the USSR to turn inward, unless there is a power strong and determined enough to make Soviet foreign adventurism too risky and expensive? In the absence of such power, is it not more likely that the Soviets will try to compensate for and to obscure their internal weaknesses by aggressive policies abroad?

The USSR emerged from World War II devastated and vulnerable, America as incontestably the world's greatest power. Had the U.S. not turned immediately to its purely domestic concerns, had it pressed Stalin more convincingly and energetically to abide by his wartime pledges, it is quite likely that he would have been constrained to abandon or at least relax his grip on Eastern Europe (as indeed happened in the case of Northern Iran in 1946 when the Soviets felt compelled to pull out their troops and give up their plans to establish satellite states there). Since such vigorous diplomatic pressure was not applied in Eastern Europe, the Soviets, for all their enormous problems of economic reconstruction, proceeded confidently to subjugate the nations of the area.

Another period of Soviet internal weakness, this time mostly political in nature, occurred after Stalin's death, when the ruling elite was deeply split and already apprehensive about the future of its relations with Mao's China. Yet those domestic and intra-Communist bloc troubles did not lead to restraint in Moscow's foreign policy. Instead they provided an additional incentive for Khrushchev to begin Soviet penetration of the Middle East and to try to do the same (as yet with scant success) in Africa; to secure a client state in the Caribbean, and to threaten the West repeatedly over Berlin.

Today the Soviets' military and industrial power, both in absolute and relative terms, dwarfs what they possessed under Stalin and even under Khrushchev. Hence it is more than ever before fallacious and dangerous to keep reassuring ourselves that because the Russians are having their own trouble or—another variant—"they are not ten feet tall" (incidentally, how tall must the United States currently appear to the world?), the Kremlin's foreign policy will become one of restraint and moderation.

WE CAN best assess the fallacy of such wishful thinking by considering the recent developments in Afghanistan and Poland. "Soviet's Global Position Eroding" is the headline of the Washington *Post*'s article on the subject (September 11, 1980). It should take little reflection to realize that the Afghan crisis has in fact demonstrated the opposite: it is the West's worldwide position and prestige which have been eroding in the last few years.

The invasion of Afghanistan is the most blatant use of force in pursuit of its expansionist aims that Moscow has undertaken since World War II. Yet if the West's reaction has been one of shock, this has not led to the kind of concrete measures which might dissuade the Soviets from similar actions in the future, let alone make them desist from trying to subjugate Afghanistan itself. The partial boycott of the Moscow Olympics served only to emphasize the disunity of the West, even over a purely symbolic gesture of protest. What Washington chose to withhold from the USSR both in grain sales and in technology transfers was for the most part made up by Soviet purchases from other non-Communist countries. But the most significant piece of evidence as to whose position in the world has been eroding is found in the reaction of other Muslim states to this act of violence directed against their fellow religionists. None of those who had diplomatic relations with the aggressor even went so far as to suspend them. And the new masters of Iran, religious fanatics as they are reputed to be, have been careful to safeguard the Soviet embassy in Teheran from any untoward incident—in vivid contrast to the case of our own embassy there.

What has been happening in Poland could be described, were we to use Marxist terminology, as a spontaneous and massive revolt (and all the more impressive because unaccompanied by violence) of the working class against its exploiters, i.e., the ruling Communist oligarchy. Thus what the democratic socialists in Russia expected to take place soon after the Bolshevik coup in 1917 finally did take place, but sixty-three years later and in another country. Heartening as the Polish story has been, it would be foolishly premature to see it as a sure sign of the return of freedom to Poland, still less as a harbinger of the crumbling of the Soviet imperial system. Again, it is depressingly characteristic that the most frequent question concerning Poland has been what the Soviets will do, rather than what concrete measures the West might take to inhibit or counteract the Kremlin's interference in Poland's internal affairs. What the

* John Lukacs, "The Light in the East," *New Republic*, September 20, 1980.

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Gdansk workers have started may well turn out to be one of the most momentous developments of recent history. But we have so far seen only the first act of the drama. Its denouement will greatly depend on the Kremlin's assessment of how the West would react to Soviet military intervention.

Like any imperial system in the past, the Soviet empire exhibits stresses and revolts and experiences occasional setbacks. And it is true that Soviet society itself is under considerable strain, with a variety of social and economic problems impinging upon its authoritarian framework. Were all these developments matched by strength, stability, and cohesion on the part of the West, we could indeed afford to be optimistic about the future course of Soviet foreign, and perhaps even domestic, policies. But in view of the actual condition of the Western democracies, there is an almost irresistible temptation for the Soviet leaders to try to compensate for their internal and intra-bloc difficulties by making trouble for others.

It is also reasonable for the Soviet leaders to believe that the fears they inspire in the outside world can be of direct help in remedying their own domestic problems, as well as those they encounter in dealing with other Communist states. The industrialized countries' readiness to sell their advanced technology to the USSR and to furnish massive credits to the Communist bloc (often at relatively low interest rates) has not been uninfluenced by the hope that such economic intercourse helps propitiate the irascible Soviet colossus. Conversely, the Soviets count on the silent persuasiveness of their ICBM's and their tanks to deter the West from seeking too close a relationship with Communist China, or from assisting Peking in rapidly modernizing its industrial and military machine. The Soviet marshals may be feigning their apparent equanimity at the prospect of nuclear confrontation, but a West German or Italian cannot be sure, especially when he contemplates how, quantitatively at least, the USSR has surpassed the U.S. stockpile of strategic weapons. With the American nuclear umbrella over Europe now full of holes, perhaps it behooves his country to edge a bit further away from Washington and to be more understanding of Moscow's sensitivities and needs.

IT IS indeed true that all of us must hope for changes to take place within the Soviet Union, changes which would persuade its leaders to liberalize their own society and to abandon their expansionist and destabilizing policies abroad. But such changes will not come of themselves.

Here history again offers useful instruction. The main impetus for the liberalization of the Russian political and social system in the 19th century and after 1905 came as a consequence not only of internal pressures, but because of the worldwide attractiveness and power of liberal ideas. Autocracy became synonymous with backwardness and national weakness, and what was happening in the outside world was a vivid demonstration that, on the contrary, national power and well-being were advanced by free institutions. Russia's relapse into autocracy after two generations of political progress came only after another demonstration, this time of the failure of liberal institutions and democracy as seen in World War I and the disarray of Russian society after the February Revolution.

Since 1945 the Soviet regime has, at least with partial success, sought to teach its own people, as well as the emerging nations, the opposite lesson to that offered by the 19th century: liberal and democratic institutions make for national weakness. Its other claims to legitimacy exposed or tarnished, the Communist state has placed its bet on the competitive advantages which its denial of freedom offers in today's global politics. The unity of the Communist movement has been irretrievably lost, and the doctrine itself has become discredited or irrelevant in the eyes of the people of the Soviet Union themselves. Hence the regime strives to demonstrate viability and dynamism by its enhanced power and influence throughout the world: it is under Communism that the Soviet Union has steadily advanced in power and influence, while the democracies, for all their alleged freedoms and riches, have been in retreat.

Thus the defeats and humiliations suffered by the West serve as a kind of negative indoctrination for the Soviet citizen. Whatever his discontents with what he finds at home, can he really conclude, if he pays attention to what is happening in the world at large, that the future belongs to democracy? And so it is only if the democratic world recoups its strength and cohesion that it can expect that developments such as the recent ones in Poland will pass into history not as mere interludes in Soviet imperial expansion, but as harbingers of a new and better era.

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In Defense of Capitalists

George Gilder

ONE of the most important events of recent decades has been the decline in the mystique of socialism. As long as socialism shone as a dream of justice and equity in a world of depression and struggle, its influence was nearly impregnable among idealistic intellectuals. Even thinkers hostile to Communism and other extreme or utopian forms of socialism would affirm its essential egalitarian and redistributionist agenda and criticize what were seen as exploitative and mercenary aspects of capitalism.

Whatever else socialism may be, however, it is no longer a dream. Versions of socialist reality proliferate everywhere, from totalitarian Communism to every brand and admixture of "social democracy," and at times it now appears that capitalism has become the dream. The capitalist dream, like the Communist one, sometimes fantasizes the withering away of the state and the attainment of an almost mystical equilibrium of perfect markets and personal freedoms. Present-day advocates of capitalism sometimes sound like socialists of the past, wondering in perplexity how anyone can impugn their vision of peace and freedom in a world of oppressive bureaucracies and aggressively mercantilist nation-states. Some journals of the intelligentsia have even taken to examining hostility to the marketplace as a neurotic symptom in much the way that their predecessors identified the "authoritarian personality" as a peculiar pathology of capitalism.

Nonetheless, despite the evident change in the intellectual climate, it cannot be said that hostility toward capitalism has strikingly diminished—that the demise of the socialist dream has issued in a clear triumph of capitalist ideals in the modern mind. Instead, what has chiefly happened is that the alternatives to capitalism now suffer the same kind of baleful scrutiny that previously befell only the theories of free enterprise. Capitalism and its rationales are still widely impugned and its future strongly questioned. The dream of socialism has given way not to a dream of capitalism, except among a minority of libertarian true believers, but to a kind of dreamless agnosticism toward all economic ideals—an exorcism of spirit from the economic world.

SINCE the early casualties of any rigorously socialist state always include the independent intellectuals, it is a matter of some curiosity that so many intellectuals distrust and even detest capitalism. Some of the reasons for this attitude are explored in *Capitalism: Sources of Hostility*, by a group of noted thinkers, mostly "neoconservatives," including Roger Starr, Peter T. Bauer, Nathan Glazer, Lewis S. Feuer, Dale Vree, Stanley Rothman, and Ernest van den Haag, who also edited the volume.*

As might be expected, the essays are cogent and interesting. Van den Haag himself contributes two lucid and penetrating pieces: an introduction and a lead essay on the irrational hostility to capitalism on the Left. Lewis Feuer offers an intriguing analysis of the Oedipal roots of student rebellion and intellectual dissent. But the central question raised by this book, the most fundamental problem of hostility to capitalism, is not confronted by either of these essays; nor is it directly addressed by the other contributors.

The fundamental problem is not Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Rennie Davis, or any of the other figures discussed so incisively by Lewis Feuer. Nor is it Gunnar Myrdal and the other socialist or Fabian economists whom Peter T. Bauer pillories in his essay on the Western sources of hostility to capitalism in the Third World. And in this country, as Nathan Glazer points out, all surveys of professorial opinion register only small minorities with explicitly socialist views. Even the vast majority of academic economists and sociologists have rejected Marxism for more "complex and pluralistic visions."

The truth is that the problem arises not among the opponents of capitalism but among its defenders. One can begin with this very book. Commissioned by the Liberty Fund, published by the Heritage Foundation, dominated by professed advocates of capitalism, *Sources of Hostility* is a highly ambivalent and strangely pessimistic study of its subject. It ends, moreover, with an essay by Stan-

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ley Rothman which, though nominally favorable to capitalism, epitomizes—in its credulous acceptance of liberal objections to the system—the very sector of the academic environment in which hostility to capitalism continues to flourish.

Neither conservative nor liberal intellectuals have explained the religious, moral, and epistemological foundations of the system. Neither academics of the Left nor of the Right have accurately described its nature. The discussion of capitalism has been dominated by the imagery of the Left because the imagery of the Right has been so inadequate. A figure like Pope John Paul II finds himself using the moralistic idiom of the Left chiefly because the Right is nearly bereft of a convincing rhetoric of economic ideals.

This absence is apparent even in Adam Smith. Like many present-day conservative intellectuals, he was charmed by the ways of free markets but disdainful of businessmen. Seldom did they gather but to "conspire against the public interest," wrote Smith in one of his most famous passages. "Not from benevolence," he insisted, should one expect one's bread from the baker. It is an alchemy of self-interest—guided by an invisible hand—that is to bring us the benefits of capitalism. Later, the more mathematical advocates of capitalism would sing of equilibrium, a Newtonian dance of equations, as the source of our multiplying loaves. To this day, most conservatives would rather celebrate free markets than applaud private enterprise, and would prefer to laud individual freedom than to praise the particular free individuals, the entrepreneurs, who make the system succeed.

The conservative vision diverges less emphatically than most intellectuals understand from the prevailing liberal dream of an antiseptic market socialism or a regime of free markets purged of the rich: capitalism without capitalists. For all the exaltation of "competition" and "liberty," there is little explanation of what capitalism is for and little understanding of why it works. Capitalism is seen as an interplay of interests lifted into equilibrium by an invisible hand and consisting chiefly of invisible men.

This entire doctrine, for all its analytical elegance, tends to be a distraction and irrelevance in the real world. The view of perfect markets, contrary to all the usual claims, serves less as a case for limited government than as a pretext for continual interventions to remedy the system's inevitable imperfections. The typical free-market view will neither attract followers nor compensate in the public mind for the undenied corollary of greedy predators getting rich.

In response to the perfectionist vision, leftist critics can offer seductive indictments of "monopoly capitalism," vivid catalogues of "crime in the suites," grim recitations of "dark satanic mills," and bizarre tales of "robber barons" as the founding fathers of the system and lineal forebears of its current multinational leaders. The Left can quote Smith and John Stuart Mill on the dubious character of businessmen and on the likely destiny of the system in a "stationary state." They can even summon Joseph Schumpeter, for most of his life a defender of the capitalist faith but in the end a prophet of bureaucratic stagnation as the fate of free enterprise.

Against this onslaught the Right usually musters in retort only the evidence that capitalism works to create wealth, and that its associated freedoms are congenial to intellectuals and necessary to the sustenance of democracy. To a dramatic tapestry of criminals and monopolists, robber barons and oil sheiks, in counterpoint to the images of the exploited poor and black—to a repertory of "compassionate" liberal politicians, militant protesters, and austere revolutionary heroes—the Right responds with apostrophes to the workings of abstract markets. It will not do.

THE case for capitalism is necessarily the case for capitalists. It should not be a difficult argument to make. The so-called robber barons built the railroad, steel, and oil industries on which American prosperity still heavily relies. For the first time, they made it possible for the masses of the poor to hope for an escape from poverty and oppression—and even to dream of wealth.

Standard Oil, for example, is the most famous of all the allegedly exploitative monopolies. Yet during its heyday between 1870 and 1885, when it briefly gained nearly 90 percent of the market, it rapidly expanded production, in defiance of every concept of monopoly, and lowered the price of its principal product, refined kerosene, by 70 percent. By 1897 it had reduced the price of refined oil by a similar amount, to the lowest level in the history of the petroleum industry. Its critics objected not chiefly to its exploitation of consumers, but to its superbly competitive service of them. Although some of the company's behavior would not pass muster at the Federal Trade Commission today, Standard Oil's contribution to the nation's growth —particularly in preparing for the mass liberation accomplished by the automobile—dwarfs the rather picayune and mostly false charges leveled against it by less successful rivals.

Far too much is made by both the Left and the Right of the problem of monopoly, as if the domination of markets were usually a grave perversion of the system. The word monopoly has become an almost empty pejorative, meaning anything big and bad and capitalist. Defined without prejudice, however, the word merely denotes a single company dominating a market. As such it can be said that the quest for monopoly is the driving force of capitalism.

In fact, capitalism is best described as the com-

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petitive pursuit of transitory positions of monopoly. The essential triumph of the system is not the "perfect markets" of commodity futures in undifferentiated goods, but the normally monopolistic launching of new products. New products always dominate the markets they create, at least for a time, and the better the product and the lower the price, the longer the monopoly will last, and the more the world will benefit. Xerox, Polaroid, and IBM, for example, established monopolies partly through government patent, but perpetuated them by staying in the lead in their chosen products for more than a decade. Today, however, all of these companies face vigorous rivals, even while they themselves offer new competition to government-subsidized firms in a world economy now more competitive than ever before in history.

An even more influential argument against capitalism, voiced by theologian Dale Vree in *Sources of Hostility*, is that the system subsists on selfishness and greed. Espoused by Adam Smith, who identified narrow self-interest as the essential impulse of capitalist growth, and accepted by most defenders as well as critics of free enterprise, this view suggests the deadly charge that capitalism violates crucial religious and moral teachings. The implication is that our wealth springs from some Faustian pact, that the system is inherently bad and must be ameliorated with socialist programs and adjustments. Such beliefs underlie the defensive and guilt-ridden posture of the American rich and indeed of much contemporary American culture.

This attitude, however, reflects an erroneous conception of the origins and essence of capitalism. The anthropological evidence shows that the system begins not with the greed that provokes tribal wars but with the gifts that prevent them. Tribal capitalists were not warriors or predators; they were the feast givers, potlatchers, and *mumis* who transcended the constraints of barter by simply making offerings to their neighbors. These gifts imposed implicit debts on their recipients and prompted new gifts in compensation, thus extending and accelerating the processes of exchange that had been stalled in the intricacies of predetermined trading or in the conflicts of a pre-capitalist zero-sum game mentality. Since the most successful gifts are those that are worth more to the recipient than to the giver, this system, like all free markets, depended on an attitude closely akin to altruism: an imaginative sensitivity to the needs of others. Since others cannot reciprocate unless they are productive and successful, the system prospers on good will. As Walter Lippmann wrote in *The Good Society*: "For the first time in human history," men found "a way of producing wealth in which the good fortune of others multiplies their own" and in which "the golden rule was economically sound."

Capitalism today still thrives on the same principles of imaginative giving. A gift is defined not by the absence of any return, but by the absence of a predetermined return. Unlike socialist investments, investments under capitalism are analogous to gifts, in that the returns are not preordained and depend entirely on the good fortune of others and on understanding their needs. Just as successful gifts are valued more by the recipient than by the donor, investments succeed only if their resulting products are valued more by the potential purchasers than by the producers.

This difference—this increase in value imparted by the process of production and exchange—is the profit engendered by the system. Profit can be seen as a measure of the extent to which an investment reflects an accurate understanding of the needs of others and a suppression of the immediate needs and desires of the giver or producer. Egocentric producers, oriented more toward self-expression than toward the service of others, often claim special virtue and demand public subsidies for their unwanted production—whether of alternative energy, unintelligible poems and music, or undesired personal-counseling services. But in fact it is the businessmen they disdain for their "other-direction" who are truly serving others.

The spirit of capitalism is generous and optimistic about human nature. "Give and you will be given unto" is its fundamental theme. The argument that capitalism is a valuable system chiefly because it recognizes and exploits human greed and rapacity is the opposite of the truth.

From the point of view of past knowledge, the optimism of individual businessmen is irrational. The vast majority of new investments in unexplored fields or untried products always fail. Of all plausible new inventions, fewer than 1 percent are brought into production; of all the books that are written, only a small proportion are published, and perhaps only 10 percent would be said to compensate the writer for his time and effort. Yet such "irrational" investments, such waste of creative energies, are the secret of capitalist success and the source of the human triumph, against all odds, over the centuries.

A rationalist intellectual may be reluctant to depend on a fundamentally irrational process like capitalism, which subsists on optimism and faith, for the very survival of human civilization. The intellectual often insists that there must be a better way. But there isn't. Capitalism *is* economics. To people who cannot understand capitalism, all human progress becomes incomprehensible.

Those skeptical economists who imagine that narrow self-interest is the source of wealth are incapable of explaining economic progress anywhere it is not already occurring. John Kenneth Galbraith, for example, in his recent book, *The Nature of Mass Poverty*, con-

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cludes that development is virtually impossible in many parts of the world. The poor, he explains, "accommodate themselves to their poverty." He does not object to this behavior. He finds it a reasonable "refusal to struggle against the impossible . . . they accept [their poverty]. Nor is such acceptance a sign of weakness of character. Rather it is a profoundly rational response."

Galbraith is exactly right. As long as men are "profoundly rational" in the modern secular sense, economic development will indeed seem impossible and it will not occur. Instead, as Galbraith shows, there will be an "equilibrium of poverty" and the best way to escape it is to emigrate to the industrial world, which, fortunately, has not yet fully succumbed to the rationality of resignation.

Like Adam Smith, Galbraith has no answer to the question of why the rationality of resignation did not prevail in the industrial world as well. Many now wealthy countries, after all, had a far smaller endowment of so-called natural resources than does the Third World today, and nearly all of them lacked examples and proofs of possible success. His theory of an equilibrium of poverty would apply with far more force to 18th-century England or America than to 20th-century India. Enterprise always seems most improbable where it is most needed: in a depressed or undeveloped economy, with low demand and little evidence of opportunity. Any economic theory that cannot explain progress under these circumstances is worthless as a theory of development.

The seminal economic ventures have little to do with a careful calculation of existing markets and prospects. These firms arise in defiance of past failures and current stagnation and rely for their success on the simultaneous ventures of others who also give of their work and savings with no assurance of reward. These ventures create demand and even if they fail, they may validate the investments of others.

As David McClelland wrote about the building of railroads across the American continent: "When they were built they could hardly be justified in economic terms, as the subsequent ruin of many stockholders demonstrated. Furthermore, they would never have been economically justified if the country had not been swarming with thousands of small entrepreneurs who repeatedly overestimated their chances of success, but who collectively managed to settle and develop the West while many of them individually were failing." The failures continue today, with some 4,700 small businesses launched every week in America while 4,500 others collapse. Such waste and irrationality are essential to economic progress. Because no one can predict the future, or tell the successes from the failures, a system open to risk, infused with faith, driven by an irrational optimism in the face of the always insuperable odds, will generate a steady flow of invention and enterprise rather than Galbraith's equilibrium of despair.

WHAT Dale Vree regards as the weaknesses of capitalism—selfishness, hedonism, and materialism—are in fact the products of a secular rationalist culture hostile to the religious values and attitudes on which capitalism depends. Calculations of personal gain of the sort extolled by Adam Smith lead not to economic growth but to a quest for comfort and safety, the rationality of resignation. In our secular society, the invisible hand of self-interest fosters an ever expanding welfare state, subsidizing sloth and failure. This is the root of the crisis of capitalism and the problem of classical economics today.

Hostility to capitalism is not some narrow political distress. It is hostility toward the biological inequalities, the unpredictability and struggle of all human life, the perils of long-run commitments, and the religious faith that induces men to take the risks and make the sacrifices needed for the progress of mankind. Hedonism, materialism, and selfishness are all reflections of a secular rationalist culture estranged from the spiritual sources of the human triumph.

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Socrates and Us

Irving Younger

SOCRATES never wrote a word. We know of him because he taught Plato, who put him in some of the dialogues. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* mention him, and Aristophanes makes fun of him in *The Clouds*. He served with distinction as a common soldier, returning from the wars to become a nonstop philosopher. His purpose in the world, he thought, was to make himself and his fellow citizens better, and this he set out to do with wit, merriment, gaiety, and an intellect as great as any the world has seen.

The oracle at Delphi had been asked who was the wisest of men. Socrates, came the reply, whereupon Socrates decided to prove the oracle wrong. He roamed the streets and public places of Athens, questioning all he met—poets, politicians, laborers—hoping to find one wiser than himself. He was forced to admit at last that the oracle had been right. All men were ignorant, but Socrates knew that he was ignorant, which made him wiser than the rest.

In 404 B.C.E., the oligarchic party, led by Critias and Alcibiades, won power in Athens. Socrates was on their side. When Anytus's democratic party resumed office a year or two later, Anytus set out to humble Socrates. Because an amnesty barred any prosecution for supporting the oligarchs, Anytus instigated the indictment of Socrates for "corruption of the young" and for the "practice of religious novelties."

Trial was by a jury of 501 Athenian citizens, a majority controlling. The prosecution spoke first. Then Socrates answered. Plato reports his speech in the *Apology*, a word which here means not to beg pardon but to justify one's life. This is what I am, says Socrates, and accordingly this is what I must do:

> So long as I draw breath and have my faculties, I shall never stop practicing philosophy and exhorting you and elucidating the truth for everyone that I meet. I shall go on saying, in my usual way, "My very good friend, you are an Athenian and belong to a city which is the greatest and most famous in the world for its wisdom and strength. Are you not ashamed that you give your attention to acquiring as much money as possible . . . and give no attention or thought to truth and understanding and the perfection of your soul?"

The jury found Socrates guilty by a vote of 280 to 221.

The trial now proceeded to the question of penalty. First the prosecutor spoke, asking for the death sentence but probably assuming that once the jury heard Socrates' plea, the punishment would be something short of capital. In the mind's eye, every head turns to Socrates. He is elderly, though hardly frail. Short, muscular, with a face almost coarse in its strength, he begins:

> There are a great many reasons, gentlemen, why I am not distressed by this result—I mean your condemnation of me—but the chief reason is that the result was not unexpected. . . .However, we must face the fact that the prosecution demands the death penalty. What alternative penalty shall I propose to you, gentlemen? Obviously it must be adequate. Well, what penalty do I deserve to pay in view of what I have done? I have never lived an ordinary life. I did not care for the things most people care about: making money, having a comfortable home, high rank. . . . Instead, I set myself to do for you individually what I hold to be the greatest possible service: I tried to persuade each one of you not to think more of practical advantages than of his mental and moral well-being. What do I deserve for behaving in this way? . . . Well, what is appropriate for a poor man who is a public benefactor and who requires leisure for giving you moral encouragement? . . . If I am to suggest an appropriate penalty which is strictly in accordance with justice, I suggest free maintenance by the state.

Perhaps the jury grew restless at this point, wondering whether Socrates was being satirical. He responded by mentioning the possibility of banishment:

> Perhaps someone may say, "But surely, Socrates, after you have left us you can spend the rest of your life in quietly minding your own business." This is the hardest thing of all to make you understand. . . . I tell you that to let no day pass without discussing all the subjects about which you hear me talking . . . is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that the unexamined life is not worth living.

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The jury voted again: 360 to 141. The penalty was death. Socrates spoke a third time. He accepted the sentence. He was content:

> No doubt it was bound to be so, and I think that the result is fair enough. Now it is time that we were going, you to live and I to die. But which of us has the happier prospect, only God knows.

What Socrates said to his friends in prison and the manner of his death may be read in the *Crito* and the *Phaedo* of Plato.

Now, in the thought of that man or woman who makes any pretense at all to humane culture, a central place ought to belong to Socrates. It was he who taught our world that traditional questions have rational answers. It was he who, by his conversation and example, showed that individual striving after the good is among the purposes of life. It was he who demonstrated the morality of each man's aspiration and so laid the groundwork for liberal democracy.

But there is more. The story of the trial of Socrates teaches a double lesson well worth pondering. First, the power of Athens was manifest not in king, emperor, judge, council, parliament, president, prime minister, or first secretary. It lay in the people themselves (which to an Athenian meant all free males). They heard the case; whereupon they voted; and thus the government of Athens had made a decision about Socrates. Popular sovereignty can go no further. This is democracy at its purest.

Second, the Athenian jury was untrammeled in its power. What it chose to do it was entitled to do, because in the people themselves lay its legitimacy. No opposing political force hedged it. No higher law confined it. Here was popular sovereignty supreme, limitless, above each and all: its achievement, the condemnation and death of Socrates. This is democracy at its most dangerous.

WE ARE reminded by the trial of Socrates that power corrupts no matter where power resides, in the people no less than in a tyrant; and so it is that, however they are organized and wherever sovereignty be lodged, all governments need restriction. Without restriction, despotism is inevitable, though it go by the name of the people. Given restriction, liberty has a chance.

The founders of our nation knew as much. Their method of restricting governmental power is called constitutionalism. Above all the other laws of the land is a supreme law, the Constitution, which vests sovereignty in the people, as the first three words of the Constitution's preamble make clear, and which in Article I sets up a Congress of the people's representatives. My purpose here is to speculate upon that principal institution of our democracy, the seat of American sovereignty, and I begin by thinking some more about Socrates' trial.

The Athenian jury was popular sovereignty at its purest and most dangerous. The jury convicted Socrates and sentenced him to death because Socrates was a gadfly, stinging Athens with questions about truth and goodness and justice and how man ought to live. The people of Athens hated Socrates because they hated his questions. They had the power to kill him and they used it. But of course Socrates' questions did not go away. They remained with the Athenians in the person of Plato and his pupils; they are with us still. In short, democracy no less than other forms of government is capable of stupidity, and the chief stupidity a democracy needs to guard against is that exemplified by the Athenians' verdict against Socrates. To eliminate Socrates would eliminate his infuriating questions, the Athenians fancied. It would be so because each Athenian was the receptacle of sovereignty, the power of the state, and since the power of the state was supreme, whatever the Athenians wanted could be had merely by willing it to be so.

The premise of this logic is that the power of the state can accomplish anything. The premise is false. No government has been able to change the moment of sunrise by so much as a second. Sovereign power is political power, subject to the deficiencies and weaknesses of all political enterprise. This, democracy finds it peculiarly difficult to accept, perhaps because to abjure the false premise of omnipotent sovereignty is vividly to acknowledge the personal and specific frailties, imperfections, and sins of each and every one of the citizens from whom sovereignty derives. That is why fatuousness—the attempt to use political power to accomplish ends political power cannot accomplish—is especially a characteristic of democratic governments, as it was when Athens sought to rid itself of Socrates' questions by ridding itself of Socrates.

The prime symptom of democratic fatuousness is the fevered enactment of laws. Lacking all negative capability, the citizens try to use their sovereignty to sweeten every unpleasantness. They do it with statutes. Their response to adversity, to anything that goes wrong, is a law to fix it. In a democracy no longer healthy, government doesn't just throw money at problems. It throws laws.

Thus Tacitus, speaking of Rome, said: "The more corrupt the Republic, the more the laws." No less a thinker than Jean Jacques Rousseau saw the degeneration of Athenian democracy in the proliferation of its laws. In the literature of our times, the truth known to Tacitus and to Rousseau seems to have been misplaced. It is most nearly expressed in C.S. Lewis's *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*:

> The modern theory of sovereignty is often called Austinian, but might just as well be called Johnsonian, for it is very clearly stated in [Samuel Johnson's] *Taxation No Tyranny*: "All government is ultimately and essentially absolute." On this view, total freedom to make

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what law it pleases, superiority to law because it is the source of law, is the characteristic of the state; of democratic states no less than of monarchical. That doctrine has proved so popular that it now seems to many a mere tautology. . . . We take it for granted that the highest power in the state, whether that power is a despot or a democratically elected assembly, will be wholly free to legislate and incessantly engaged in legislation.

How fares American democracy? Excluding private bills, Congress enacted 3,359 laws in the decade just ended. Adding in the product of state legislatures makes a scandalous total monstrous. In the 1970's, the legislature of the state of New York, for example, passed 9,780 laws. If the other forty-nine states are taken into account, the number of laws enacted in the 1970's is some 250,000—a quarter of a million separate statutes in ten years.

When Charles Evans Hughes taught at the Cornell Law School in the 1890's, its library contained about 10,000 volumes. Today it exceeds 300,000. In nine decades, a thirty-fold increase, a collection adding to itself on the average as many books every three years as it had altogether when Professor Hughes was among its users. That is, our generation has thirty times more law than our great-grandparents' generation, most of that increase attributable to legislation. Inflation indeed! Will anyone venture to contend that with thirty times more law we are thirty times happier or wiser or better governed or more contented than our great-grandparents were?

What we should do to purge ourselves is obvious but impractical. We ought to declare a national emergency and, as Roosevelt did with the banks in 1933, impose a moratorium on legislation. Padlock the capitol in Washington and close every state legislature for a year. That will give us the time we need to take stock, assess our purposes, canvass our means, and come to a true rather than a chimerical conception of the possibilities of law.

A more realistic suggestion follows. Legal inflation has corrupted the very process of legislation in ways not so much having to do with the substance of the laws as with the method and style of their enactment. The remedy would be the development of a kind of law of laws, a set of rules enunciating the minimum formal requirements which a purported statute must satisfy before it can be accepted as a statute *de jure*. It would no longer suffice, in the instance of a federal law, for example, merely that it be passed by Congress and duly approved by the President. At least four other rules would come into play, rules which could be brought into existence through litigation under one or another provision of the United States Constitution. Lawyers, get busy.

ONE. By contrast with Socrates' Athens, ours is a representative democracy. The country is too large and the population too immense for direct participation by the citizenry in the affairs of government. Hence to make the laws we elect representatives, through whom we govern ourselves. With increasing frequency in recent years, Congressmen have been heard to admit that much of the time they do not know what it is they are voting on because there is not enough time to read every bill. They read only those falling within their special fields of interest. Their vote on many bills, then, is at the direction of someone else, be he party leader, lobbyist, or trusted colleague; and that is not representative democracy. When a Congressman votes for a bill, he impliedly warrants that he, as a member of Congress, invokes such and such a power delegated to him by the people in Article I, section 8, of the Constitution. But how can he invoke a power when he is ignorant of the content of the bill? He does not even know which of section 8's eighteen subsections is the relevant one. It is not too much to hope that a court might hold the blind assertion of legislative power no assertion of legislative power, adopting the following as a first requirement of formal sufficiency: *No statute is validly enacted unless the Congressmen voting for it have read it.*

Two. Even when a Congressman reads a bill, he may not know what he is voting on because what he is voting on is not knowable. Many statutes have gone over the edge. They are not merely difficult, they are unintelligible. Here is the sort of opinion some lawyer will one day win from a United States District Judge, thereby establishing a second rule of formal sufficiency, as stated in the opinion's penultimate paragraph:

> This is a class action in which the plaintiff-taxpayer, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, sues for a judgment declaring the Internal Revenue Code unconstitutional. His argument is (1) he does not understand it, (2) nobody understands it, and (3) it is therefore invalid. The theory is novel, to be sure, but not for that reason necessarily wrong.
>
> Let us examine the code.
>
> *Item.* I doubt that the ordinary citizen of average education and normal mental endowment can grasp the meaning of a sentence more than fifty words long. The code contains sentences of 379 words [sec. 170 (b) (1) (A)], of 385 words [sec. 6651 (a)], and of 506 words [sec. 7701 (a) (19)].
>
> *Item.* Apart from mere length, I doubt that the ordinary citizen can grasp the meaning of a sentence which does not run more or less in a straight line from beginning to middle to end. What then is he to make of the last sentence of section 509 (a)?
>
> "For purposes of paragraph (3), an organization described in paragraph (2) shall be deemed to include an organization described in section 501 (c) (4), (5), or (6) which would be described in paragraph (2) if it were an organization described in section 501 (c) (3)."
>
> I do not wish to expand this opinion unduly,

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and so, for additional illustrations, I refer interested persons to any page of the Internal Revenue Code selected at random.

The due-process clause means many things. One of them, assuredly, is that the enactments of Congress, whatever their subject-matter, be comprehensible to an ordinary citizen upon the application of reasonable diligence. I find that the Internal Revenue Code does not meet that standard. It is declared unconstitutional.

This may be the first case holding a statute void for excessive complexity. I trust it will not be the last.

THREE. It is difficult, we have said, for democracy to face up to the sad fact that we do not know how to ameliorate many of life's vexations and horrors, the consequence being a tendency for democracy to indulge in fatuous law-making. Read the newspaper any morning and you will have examples. Here is a trouble. It is immediately called a "problem," the term preferred by politicians and social theorists, connoting that there is a solution somewhere. The people demand that their representatives find the solution. To tell the people that the problem is insoluble, or that no one yet knows the solution, or that it's not so much a problem as simply the human condition, would be to tell the people the truth but not to win elections. The upshot is that the people's representatives purport to come up with a solution of the only kind available to them—a law, a law to solve the problem, a law invariably along the lines of "The problem shall be and hereby is solved." The law is nothing more than a totem-object for the Congressman to exhibit to his constituents by way of proving to them that he has done something about the problem. When the problem remains unsolved, as of course it does, the results are familiar: a feeling among the people that their representatives have failed them, a mounting distrust in the rule of law, and a diminution of faith in democracy. The dubious reader should consider section 102 of the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978:

> The Congress hereby declares that it is the continuing policy and responsibility of the federal government to use all practicable means, consistent with its needs and obligations and other essential national policies, and with the assistance and cooperation of both small and larger businesses, agriculture, labor, and state and local governments, to coordinate and utilize all its plans, functions, and resources for the purpose of creating and maintaining, in a manner calculated to foster and promote free competitive enterprise and the general welfare, conditions which promote useful employment opportunities, including self-employment, for those able, willing, and seeking to work, and promote full employment and production, increased real income, balanced growth, a balanced federal budget, adequate productivity growth, proper attention to national priorities, achievement of an improved trade balance through increased exports and improvement in the international competitiveness of agriculture, business, and industry, and reasonable price stability. . . .
>
> The Congress further declares that it is the purpose of the Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act of 1978 to improve the coordination and integration of the policies and programs of the federal government toward achievement of the objectives of such Act through better management, increased efficiency, and attention to long-range as well as short-range problems and to balancing the federal budget.

The rest of the Act says essentially that to achieve these purposes civil servants shall shuffle papers. Obviously the statute has achieved none of its purposes and cannot, for we are not certain how to achieve them. The Full Employment Act should be declared invalid on the ground that it violates a third rule of formal sufficiency: *A statute not reasonably particular as to ends, as to means, and as to the relation between them, is no statute.*

FOUR. Many statutes are onerous. It is a considerable burden to comply with them, which, conceivably, is why Congress has fallen into the habit of exempting itself from the obligation to obey them. The laws the rest of us spend an inordinate amount of time and money trying not to violate do not apply to Congress. What businessman or lawyer has not wrestled with the Fair Labor Standards Act, the Equal Pay Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act? Congress has exempted itself from all of them, and there are no doubt others. Is it necessary to belabor the implications for law and liberty? *Rex non debit esse sub homine sed sub Deo et sub lege,* wrote Bracton. The King ought to be under no man but under God and the law. What bloodshed, turmoil, and wisdom are packed into that sentence. And here is Congress, America's *rex,* the seat of our sovereignty as a representative democracy, telling us the law we are under but not they. No rationalization should be held to justify such congressional self-exemption from the statutes that bind the rest of us. The equal-protection clause must mean at least this, a fourth rule of formal sufficiency: *Any statute which does not apply to Congress as well as to the people at large is invalid.*

AMERICAN democracy has fallen upon hard times. A chief symptom of its travail is the inflation of the laws. But to be ill is not to be dead. There is hope, so long as we do the things which must be done. We must cease to pretend that political power is infallible and omnipotent. We must think clearly about law and liberty and the limited efficacy of legislation. And, in the name of Socrates, we must do it soon.

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A New International Disorder

Elie Kedourie

BEFORE 1914 world politics was very much the politics of European states. Relations among these states were fairly stable in their character, and their nature could be grasped and understood with the help of two organizing ideas. These organizing ideas were not imposed by students of international relations. They derived naturally, so to speak, from the way in which European states had come to conduct themselves toward one another. Nor were these organizing ideas simply theoretical concepts. They were also practical rules of thumb with which men of affairs were familiar, and by which they thought it prudent to be guided.

These two organizing ideas were, on the one hand, that of the balance of power, and, on the other, that of the concert of Europe. The notion of the balance of power meant that the security of each individual state, as well as the general peace, could best be preserved if the power and ambition of any state or combination of states could be counterbalanced or checkmated by a rival combination. About the operation of the balance there was of course nothing automatic. To establish and maintain a balance, which was as much worldwide as it was European, required acumen, boldness, cool heads, and moderation. Because the necessary wisdom and the requisite political skills were not always available, because miscalculations could always happen, the balance would sometimes overbalance and war would ensue. To end a war in a manner such that the balance could be reestablished required as much skill and wisdom as to keep an existing balance in being. The outbreak of war in 1914 proved the most serious failure in balance-of-power politics in modern European history, and the so-called settlement which followed in 1918-19 was likewise the most serious failure to reestablish a balance—a failure whose consequences have proved infinitely ruinous for Europe and the world.

Underlying the notion of the balance of power is the other organizing idea, that of a concert of European states. The idea is no doubt more complex, less clear-cut, and certainly less amenable to use as a rule of thumb than that of the balance of power. This other idea assumes and expresses the consciousness of a common civilization, common political attitudes, and a common language of international politics. The idea is no doubt met most frequently in the 19th century, but this is not to say that it appeared suddenly during this period. The society of states it took for granted, the body of international law that articulated the assumptions and norms according to which such a society could function and endure, were in the making from the time of Grotius in the 17th century, and even before. We might say that a *locus classicus* where the system can be seen operating most clearly is the period in the 18th century lying between the settlement of the War of the Spanish Succession (1714) and the outbreak of the Revolution in France—a period the international relations of which are magisterially described and analyzed in the first volume of Albert Sorel's *Europe and the French Revolution.*

The French Revolution posed a grave challenge to the European society of states and the assumptions on which it rested. The revolutionary ideology dismissed both balance and concert, and strove for hegemony and doctrinal uniformity. The threat was formidable and the triumph of the new order seemed at times inevitable and irresistible. But after a long struggle the threat of French hegemony was at last averted. The authors of the settlement which followed wished to look upon it as a restoration of the pre-1789 world. This of course it could not be, but it remains true that the dominant outlook within the European society of states up to 1914 accepted and took for granted the organizing ideas just described, which the French Revolution had attempted to sweep away.

The balance of power was destroyed during the war of 1914, and the Versailles settlement which followed, instead of reestablishing this balance, put the seal on its irremediable destruction. This was clearly seen when, less than fifteen years after Versailles, Germany under the Nazis embarked on an expansionist policy, and no combination of powers could be put together to act as a deterrent.

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At the heart of the Versailles settlement there was, it is true, an organizing idea which might look similar to that of the concert of Europe. The League of Nations was regarded as a kind of worldwide concert all of whose members accepted a commitment to act collectively against any disturber of the peace, thus making a balance of power—objected to by reason of its alleged amorality and cynicism, and its supposed tendency to encourage and justify armed conflict—superfluous. But involved in the idea of the League was an element at least as subversive of stability and peace as the Rights of Man had proved to be after 1789. This element, which was at the center of the League covenant, was that of national self-determination.

The idea of national self-determination assumes quite simply that the world is composed of separate, identifiable "nations," and claims that these nations are, as such, each entitled to form a sovereign state. Since, manifestly, the world is not what this theory assumes it to be, to make reality conform to the theory must involve endless upheaval and disorder. For one thing, it is by no means easy indisputably to identify these "nations"; for another, to upset all existing arrangements in order to make national self-determination the sole and overriding aim of all political action is a recipe for perpetual war. National self-determination is thus a principle of disorder, not of order. This was clearly seen when German self-determination involved the destruction in turn of Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland—states which, ironically enough, had shortly before themselves been set up in the name of national self-determination.

The war of 1914 also led to the destruction of the old order in Russia and the foundation of the Soviet Union. This too introduced a potent source of disorder in international relations. Bolshevik doctrine in external affairs may quite accurately be summed up by Lenin's dictum about domestic politics: *Kto Kogo*?—"who [will defeat] whom?" The doctrine of class struggle which this dictum encapsulates is the simple and barbaric one that politics is nothing more than a constant and deadly struggle for absolute and complete domination. Like the principle of national self-determination, that of the class struggle is incompatible with the notion of a balance of power, since balance means precisely that no single interest or principle can assume sole or overriding importance. The ideas of national self-determination and class struggle are also incompatible with the existence of a society of states whose members, irrespective of their own varied political and social arrangements, are and recognize themselves to be part of a more or less coherent international order. It is, incidentally, quite arresting—and ominous—that nuclear weapons, and the concept of a balance of terror associated with them, should so accurately mirror Lenin's maxim. For does not the balance of terror seem the concept most fitted to international relations disordered and subverted by the sway of these totalitarian principles?

World War II, which started as a European war, ended the centrality of Europe in world politics. But the much wider, and eventually worldwide, political stage saw, in the following decades, in an even more accentuated and acute form, the same systematic disorder in international relations which had already become manifest at the end of World War I. The United Nations, even more than the League, was incompatible with international order and stability. It is true that no particularly new organizing ideas or principles were associated with the United Nations. However, by 1945, the Bolsheviks and their doctrine had attained a respectability and influence which they simply did not have in 1918. But instead of seeking to counterbalance Soviet power and influence, Roosevelt worked relentlessly to diminish his Western allies and dismember their empires. There is no indication in recent studies such as Christopher Thorne's *A Kind of Alliance* or William Roger Louis's *Imperialism at Bay* that Roosevelt or other U.S. policymakers considered the consequences of doing away so completely with elements which might have helped to counter ambitions by their very nature relentless and limitless. Nor is there evidence that any thought was given to the way the new worldwide society of states was to operate.

An incident typifying the policy and its illusions was the manner in which U.S. agents were instructed to welcome and encourage Ho Chi Minh in the innocent belief that here was another George Washington rising against arbitrary and despotic rule. What is so conspicuous by its absence at the time of Yalta was any awareness by the most powerful country in the world that here was a hinge of fate; that the international disorder which World War I and the ensuing settlement created was now threatening to spread more widely and becoming well-nigh impossible to extirpate. In an earlier crisis Edmund Burke saw clearly that here was no ordinary conflict, that what was being contended with was a formidable armed doctrine. No Burke now appeared. We had instead the Atlantic Charter—toothless pieties facing the armed doctrines of Bolshevism and nationalism.

Since 1945, increasingly so with the passage of years, these doctrines, destructive of international order, have secured a firmer purchase over international life. In the Third World, so-called, the two doctrines have combined in a powerful amalgam which is today the most widespread and the most attractive in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This hybrid doctrine joins the Marxist emphasis on class warfare with the nationalist vision of a humanity divided into separate nations

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each one of whom has a claim to full and unfettered sovereignty. This doctrine, the most recent proponents of which are Frantz Fanon and his imitator Colonel Kaddafi, divides the world into "northern," rich, exploiting nations and "southern," poor, exploited nations. The true class struggle, the only one of any consequence in this view, is the struggle between these two groups of nations, not between proletariat and capitalists in an industrialized society.

One corollary of this analysis is the demand for a New Economic Order, so prevalent today, and voiced in so many quarters from UNCTAD to the "nonaligned" movement and the Brandt Commission. The demand for a New Economic Order really signifies that a massive transfer of resources from Western countries to the poor countries of the so-called South shall take place. The demand is justified by a variety of arguments among which loom large allegations about colonialism and neocolonialist exploitation resting on Marxist-Leninist assumptions of whose character the Western advocates of a massive transfer do not always seem aware.

The majority of states now in the United Nations loudly and self-righteously propound these demands. These states, or most of them, attained sovereign status in the period after 1945, as a result of the destruction or self-liquidation of the European empires. They are what Michael Oakeshott has called imitation states. They are formally sovereign, but their rulers labor under strong feelings of insecurity generated by their lack of legitimacy. The product of fake elections or military coups d'état, their unrestrained power does not rest on the loyalty of those whom they rule, and they lack the strength and self-confidence which accrues to those who can speak on behalf of a well-established body politic.

Hence these states, where private interests are wholly at the mercy of the rulers, and the public interest entirely what the rulers decree, are condemned to instability and civil commotions, which become cumulative, and progressively more aggravated. Hand in hand with this condition goes an ideological style of politics. Plans and blueprints, ambitious and arbitrary, in the absence of constitutional restraints, are pursued by the rulers for the time being, only to be changed or scrapped at the rulers' whim, or as their fortunes dictate. Egypt under Nasser, Syria and Iraq under the Baath, Tanzania under Nyerere, are leading examples of this state of affairs.

FROM the mid-1950's onward, the international disorder which was now endemic in the world—and of which the United Nations may be considered the symptom and the symbol—spread rapidly throughout Africa. "Decolonization" suddenly became the settled policy of the British, the French, and the Belgians, a policy precipitately and thoroughly applied whatever the costs and the consequences. The policy was, by and large, the outcome of a unilateral decision taken by the metropolitan authorities, rather than a response to some overwhelming or irresistible pressure exerted by the African populations. The decision was based on a judgment about the worth to the metropolitan countries of administering these colonies. It was taken in the light of assumptions about the future tendencies of world politics, of the world balance of power, and of the manner in which this balance—military as well as political—would be affected by the metropolitan countries relinquishing control over Africa.

There was in these judgments a large element of defeatism, complacency, cynicism, and sheer illusion. The defeatism is best exemplified by the stance which French ministers adopted toward Tunisia and Morocco in 1954-56 when, no doubt influenced by events in Indochina, they hastily dismantled the protectorates in these two countries. The complacency may be illustrated by Harold Macmillan's well-known "wind of change" speech, in which the British prime minister unveiled to the world the shape of things to come. If, to pursue his own metaphor, navigation consisted in drifting with the wind, few ships would manage to reach a safe haven. In any case, was there really a "wind of change," or was it that the words and actions of metropolitan governments were raising a whirlwind—which would undoubtedly engulf their unfortunate African wards, but also damage their own strategic stance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union?

Neither African welfare nor the geopolitical consequence of abandoning Africa, seems to have been given much weight. This may have represented intellectual failure—akin to that which led civil servants in the Foreign Office to press for British withdrawal from Aden and the Persian Gulf in 1968-1970—but it was also the expression of a cynicism which was the ugly obverse of the complacency. De Gaulle may be said to illustrate this cynicism at its ugliest. Having decided that *l'Afrique est foutue et l'Algérie avec*, that these territories were not worth two cents, de Gaulle had no scruple in liquidating French rule abruptly and totally. In the case of Algeria, the abandonment was particularly scandalous. De Gaulle had come to power in 1958, the beneficiary of a coup d'état, as the one figure able and willing to maintain the French presence in Algeria. By 1960, the war against the FLN had been won on the ground. But by 1962 he had so maneuvered as to abandon a territory and its inhabitants who had been under French rule for over a century, causing in the process large numbers of his fellow citizens to be massacred by the new rulers or to become penniless refugees.

De Gaulle chose to act as he did because he

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looked on Algeria and the African territories as an embarrassment which hindered him in his pursuit of superpower status. He clearly did not think that giving up control, say, of Algerian oil, or of the naval base at Oran, or of other territories inland would damage French military or economic interests. A mere two decades later his miscalculation is patent.

But if Western political leaders no longer harbor de Gaulle's haughty and disdainful illusions, there is still rife among them a cynicism, to be sure not as ruthless as that which de Gaulle was pleased to flaunt, but rather more soft-spoken and comfortable, snickering, shoulder-shrugging, and low-minded. This outlook is admirably captured in an article by Peregrine Worsthorne which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* of London on September 10, 1979—the first day of the conference which encompassed the transformation of Rhodesia into Zimbabwe:

> The prospects of post-colonial Africa and Asia are beginning to look hideously ominous. For the time being the prevailing Western view is that this does not matter.
>
> Our statesmen and businessmen like to think that Third World raw materials, on which Western prosperity vitally depends, will always be available under whatever political and social system prevails in those parts—short of Russian domination. I have even heard it argued, by a senior Conservative Minister no less, . . . that the more degraded the political and social system, the easier it will be to extract the precious oil and minerals, since trade nowadays follows, not the flag, but the bribe. According to this view it does not matter a damn—the word is well chosen—who governs Africa or Asia. The more corrupt the regime, the better Britain's interests will be served. That is the new *Realpolitik*, disguised under the pretty mask of racial equality.

The policy of "decolonization" led to the setting up of European-style parliamentary regimes, the workings of which necessarily fell into the hands of European-educated Africans who speedily found themselves in a position both despotic and precarious. Despotic, because European-style government, whatever the paper checks and balances, quickly becomes transformed into an engine of oppression, all the more efficient for being endowed with European-style bureaucratic devices through which the life and livelihood of the ruled can be interfered with and controlled capriciously and minutely. But despotic as their powers are, the new rulers have, and are aware they have, a very precarious tenure. This is because there is little or no relation between the formal Western-style institutions of government and the traditional African society of which these new rulers, by some kind of magic, suddenly find themselves in control. This traditional society was a fragmented one, in which tribal loyalties and preferences ruled supreme. These attitudes naturally lead to the "corruption" which is the generally recognized hallmark of the new states. But the idea of corruption is intelligible only where it is believed that government is and must be a government of laws, that public office is not a piece of property, and that the public interest cannot be a respecter of persons. A society in which these notions have no hold is one in which the idea of corruption is unintelligible. All this is to say that between the norms and the institutions of the "decolonized" states and their social realities, between the form and the content, there is great contradiction and very dangerous tension.

IN ORDER to escape this tension which threatens their powers, the new rulers have recourse to ideological mobilization. They think to bind together in this way the body politic, to imbue it with the cohesiveness and solidarity on which the European-style institutions they operate are predicated. These ideologies are also derived from Europe, and they are the very same ones which have introduced instability and precariousness in the international order, namely, nationalism and Marxism-Leninism in one of its many varieties.

"Decolonization" has thus created an unstable and explosive situation in Africa where tribalism is at odds with European institutions of government, and where an ideological style of politics, instead of assuaging this conflict, serves to exacerbate it. Thus, the newly-created states find themselves endowed with frontiers which had been established as a result of European rivalries and compromises. A nationalist ideology predicated on the need for a cohesive, self-contained national entity is, in many places, at odds with the territorial arrangements inherited from the European empires. The civil wars in the Sudan, Nigeria, or Chad, or the war between Somalia and Ethiopia, are striking examples of conflicts which are the outcome of tribal differences now articulated—and exacerbated—by an uncompromising ideology: conflicts all the more savage and destructive now that what is at stake is the control of a state apparatus, and the enormous power such control is seen to confer. "Decolonized" Africa is a potential minefield of similar conflicts.

"Decolonization," therefore, has not brought peace to Africa, and has probably increased the burden of insecurity and oppression which the African peoples carry. It has not made relations between the West and Africa more friendly or easier to manage. The complacency has proved to be mistaken, and the cynicism cheated of those banausic advantages the cynics profess to prize. Trade may follow the bribe, but even a child will realize that bribery can be no basis either for trade or friendship.

The world balance of power, moreover, has

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been seriously affected—for the worse, so far as Western interests are concerned. The new conditions have enabled the Soviet Union to maneuver, to bargain, to hold out political and military inducements, and thus to establish itself on a continent where Russian power and influence had hitherto been unknown. In large part, the new Soviet position in Africa is the beneficiary of the voluntary Western withdrawal. But the Soviets have not purely and simply occupied vacated ground. They have brought with them an ideological style of politics which, as has been seen, has many attractions in "decolonized" Africa. The techniques of indoctrination and mass control that go with this style not only prove as welcome as political support and military supplies, but also constitute a point of affinity between what are essentially one-party states which differ only in point of efficiency and ruthlessness, and in which power is checked neither by law nor by scruple.

In recent years it has become fashionable, in the United States and Western Europe, to argue that world politics is no longer centered on the conflict between East and West, that the present challenge for the West lies in attracting the friendship and loyalty of the Third World. Even were the current military balance between East and West what it was ten or twenty years ago, this view would still be mistaken. In point of military or industrial power the Third World is negligible. Most of its states are not allies but clients. And, unfortunately, the reasons described above will necessarily make these unhappy regions, for as far as one can see, turbulent and the prey of a radical and deep-seated disorder. Turbulence can be held at bay or, better still, tamed. But you cannot sit down and smoke the pipe of peace with it, neither can you embrace it in friendship.

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"The Leading Jew in America"

Jordan A. Schwarz

THE name means "blessed" in Hebrew, Bernard M. Baruch never tired of telling acquaintances. He was a blessed man. Born in 1870, he was the son of a moderately prosperous physician who could provide him with the seed money for his speculations. And the young Baruch enjoyed the best sort of luck and timing: he entered Wall Street following the great depression of 1893-94, when prices were beginning an ascent that would continue almost unabated for the next thirty-five years. By the age of thirty-two he had accumulated a hundred thousand dollars for every year of his life.

There is no known accounting of his later worth, but Baruch himself acknowledged that he was a very rich man—although he insisted that much of what was written about his wealth was fabled. He had made it through the stock market and other means of investments that he conceded were gambles. Indeed, in many undertakings he was a hunch player, but people who knew him best knew that he seldom committed himself without insights that few other speculators possessed. Many people were born with talents, he liked to say; what talent a Fritz Kreisler had with the violin, Baruch had for making money.

And he was blessed to have been born a Jew. Baruch used his heritage to enhance his mystique. Being American in his time meant holding a faith in exceptionalism; an American Jew could double that exceptionalism. He could even make it appear that he had been chosen to enrich himself—Baruch often repeated the story about the time he was prevented from making a disastrous transaction because he had followed his mother's wishes not to trade on Yom Kippur. Certain Gentiles were always impressed by the good fortune of the people of the Old Testament even if they knew that most Jews were not blessed as was Baruch. But Baruch's special talent lay in convincing others that his Jewishness bestowed upon him a special role in society. Although he actually eschewed Judaism, Baruch subtly exploited his identity to achieve unusual visibility.

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Being a Jew could be an asset for Baruch because he lived in an age of burgeoning liberalism. Americans in the early 20th century made a dogma out of the credo of equal opportunity. Progressives believed that it did not matter to what circumstances a man was born. Just as men should have the opportunity to amass wealth by dint of industry and intelligence, so aspirations should not be restrained by religion. In a material world, how a man worshipped was immaterial. All that inhibited Americans from attaining the ideal of equality of opportunity, progressives believed, was economics: in domestic America the obstruction to opportunity took the form of monopoly; in the world it assumed the shape of traditional imperialism. By ridding the world of monopolists, cartelists, and colonialists, progressives intended to raise a standard by which men and nations could be judged by their talents for creating wealth. Woodrow Wilson articulated this "practical idealism" in his New Freedom campaign for the Presidency in 1912—through which Baruch, in subscribing money, launched his career in national affairs.

In Wilson's crusade against social discrimination, a Jew like Baruch was as useful as the issue of the eating clubs had been to Wilson while he was president of Princeton University. What better way to demonstrate the efficacy of liberalism than by proclaiming that the abilities of a Jew were more significant than his Jewishness? But it was not Baruch's talent for making money that alone impressed Wilson; there were other rich Jews including his fund-raiser, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., whom Wilson could have singled out for prominence in his administration. What impressed the President was Baruch's willingness to employ his money for public causes such as the election and reelection of Wilson and the crusade for American military preparedness nearly two years before Congress declared war. Wilson found in Baruch a businessman who was liberated from mere acquisitiveness, a pecuniary soul who possessed the "enlightened selfishness" Wilson preached for his materialistic spiritualism. Moreover, Baruch absorbed Wilson's beliefs and regurgitated them with the enthusiasm of an acolyte. Baruch would always be useful to Wilson because of his sincere loyalty to everything the President represented. In return,

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Wilson raised Baruch from a rich speculator and political fat cat to real public prominence.

In 1916 Wilson made Baruch a member of the Allied Purchasing Commission and the raw-materials expert on the Advisory Commission to the Council on National Defense, positions to which his financial expertise and political advocacy entitled him. When the United States entered World War I, Baruch headed the raw-materials section of the War Industries Board until he became the board's chairman in March 1918. In that post he effected a consolidation of authority that earned him the sobriquet of "czar" or "dictator" of America's war industries. Less an administrator than a skillful organizer and publicist, Baruch emerged from the war effort with a fame rivaled only by the Food Administration's leader, Herbert Hoover.

Following the war he could have been Secretary of the Treasury, but he chose instead to become one of President Wilson's economic advisers at the Paris Peace Conference. Like Hoover, Baruch was an ambitious Wilsonian; both men knew that the focus of public attention had shifted from Washington to Paris, where the President hoped to orchestrate the peace of the world.

Besides, Baruch needed credentials as an expert statesman on the international scene. Already two ambitions had formed in Baruch's mind: to use his wealth and influence to raise a Democratic political ally, such as Secretary of the Treasury William Gibbs McAdoo, to the Presidency of the United States; and to establish international expertise that would qualify him to become the President's first minister, the Secretary of State.

II

HOOVER could aspire to be President but Baruch knew he could not. Indeed, even Secretary of State might have been beyond Baruch's reach. The Wilsonians were liberals, but many of them still disliked Baruch because he was a Jew; others merely feared the electorate was not ready to accept Jews in positions of authority. Baruch's Jewishness, which gave him an advantage with Wilson, ironically engendered enough controversy in and out of the administration to delimit Baruch's own aspirations. How could he seek to become Secretary of State when it seemed that so few Americans would tolerate him as chairman of the War Industries Board? As Colonel Edward M. House, Wilson's closest adviser in 1917-18, succinctly put it, "I do not believe the country will take kindly to having a Hebrew Wall Street speculator given so much power."

To Baruch's face few men were willing to declare their own dislike or distrust of him as a Jew. He was a genial and engaging personality who could not possibly offend anyone, if only because he worked so hard at being liked. He was extraordinarily gregarious and charming. Baruch the man was trusted, even while Baruch the Jew was suspect.

Pejorative remarks about Jews were common in Woodrow Wilson's Washington. A Jew who successfully negotiated a point was apt to be described as having traded well, "true to his race." Jews were distasteful when they were poor and ambitious, odious when they were rich and ambitious. The young Eleanor Roosevelt, observing the Washington scene during the war while her husband was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, approved of the crusading Louis Brandeis and the genteel Morgenthau family, but these were exceptions. Invited in 1918 to a party for Baruch, she swore she would "rather be hung than be seen" there; still, she went and later reported, "The Jew party [was] appalling. I never wish to hear money, jewels, and . . . sable mentioned again." (In the 1930's she discovered that Baruch's money could be put to work for many of her causes and they became warm friends.) A progressive-minded journalist privately characterized Baruch's wife as "a typical rich bounder of a Jew woman" (Baruch's wife, Annie Griffen Baruch, was in fact born Episcopalian and raised their children in her church).

But Baruch was such an affable person that most people who knew him made of him an exception and excused his faults by attributing them to his background. Not even Baruch's staunchest advocate in Washington, President Wilson, rose above that perspective. When Wilson once discussed a position for Baruch in his administration with Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, Daniels reminded him that Baruch was "somewhat vain," to which Wilson responded, "Did you ever see a Jew who was not?"

In fact anti-Semitism was virulent in the early 1920's, an era that had passed from the Red Scare of 1919 into the heydey of the Ku Klux Klan, immigration restriction, Protestant fundamentalism and xenophobia, and nativism of numerous varieties. Henry Ford warned Americans through his newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, to be wary of Baruch because he sought to become "America's Disraeli." At least, a friend puckishly wrote Baruch, "it assures to America a better-looking Disraeli than England had."

To a degree Ford played into Baruch's hands by making him a victim of bigotry. It almost martyred him and excused him from public activities in which others were obliged to participate. When the columnist Mark Sullivan demanded to know why a man of Baruch's abilities did not take a leadership role in the Democratic party, Baruch declared he would "if it were not for anti-Semitism." He hinted that his friendship with a public figure attracted Jew-baiting, and he urged his associates, "when I become a liability, please say so, and I shall become as quiescent as I have been active." But Baruch enjoyed the public spotlight too much to lower his visibility, except when it was personally advantageous.

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The vehicle of his ambition, William G. McAdoo, was probably the popular choice of delegates to the 1920 Democratic convention, but he mysteriously withdrew on the eve of its meeting. McAdoo made up for this in 1924 by carrying his candidacy through to a 103-ballot deadlock with Alfred E. Smith before they both withdrew in favor of a lackluster nominee, John W. Davis. Baruch vowed never again to commit himself publicly to a presidential candidate prior to the Democratic convention.

ALREADY established as a major financial angel for Democrats during the Republican 1920's, Baruch shifted to bankrolling candidates for the Senate in Southern and Western states where the primary was usually decisive and the likelihood for retaining power through seniority was high. Senate Democrats showed their gratitude: by 1929 Baruch could call Joe T. Robinson of Arkansas, Pat Harrison of Mississippi, and Key Pittman of Nevada—the Senate Democratic leader and the ranking Democrats on the Finance and Foreign Relations Committees respectively—his personal friends. They, along with Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky and James F. Byrnes of South Carolina, among others, were known in Washington as part of "Bernie's string." It is nearly impossible to measure Baruch's tangible influence, but while Hoover was in the White House the press treated Baruch as the most powerful Democrat in the capital. He was consulted by Democrats on legislative strategy and consulted by Hoover on financial policies. Whatever the truth of his power, the popular perception of his influence built his reputation.

Franklin D. Roosevelt was a believer in that reputation. Immediately after Roosevelt won the 1932 nomination in Chicago, Baruch, who had been publicly uncommitted to any candidate, offered the services of his protege, Hugh Johnson, for the Brain Trust; it was an offer that Roosevelt dared not refuse. Roosevelt's election seemed to assure Baruch of enhanced influence. The New Dealers disliked the more conservative Baruch, but, as Roosevelt patiently explained to one adviser, Rexford Tugwell, Baruch "owned" sixty Congressmen and "that, he said, was power around Washington." Later in the 1930's the President explained to Frances Perkins why so much of his time was spent deferring to Baruch: "Baruch can raise rumpuses. He can put things in our paths. He's got lots of influence on the Congress still. . . . He helps out tremendously in keeping the more wild members of Congress, the Southern members of Congress, kind of down and reconciled. . . . Barney's a great help in keeping them in line."

At this critical juncture Roosevelt denied Baruch the one post that might have fulfilled his ambition: Secretary of State. For years Baruch had barraged the press with articles and pronouncements on foreign affairs; he had hired John Foster Dulles to help ghostwrite a book under Baruch's name on the economic questions of the Paris Peace Conference. None of this overcame the widespread opinion among policy-makers that Baruch was a lightweight in foreign affairs. Moreover, Roosevelt himself distrusted Baruch in politics and spread gossip that Baruch used unprincipled speculative tactics to enhance his already considerable wealth. Who would want a Wall Street gambler—and a Jewish one at that—running American foreign policy?

As a consolation prize, Baruch was asked to be a member of the planning group for the World Economic Conference to be held in London in 1933. A disciple of his, George Peek, was appointed head of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and Hugh Johnson was tendered the leadership of the National Recovery Administration. The appointments of his old cronies made it appear that Baruch indirectly controlled both key agencies. Both men, as Baruch anticipated, proved to be politically and administratively inept; they were eased out of the administration in 1934. Still, Roosevelt and Baruch astutely found other means by which they kept their relations sweet.

If the inescapable fact was that Baruch had failed to become "the American Disraeli," World War II established him as the most visible Jew in American life. A major critic of Roosevelt's mobilization and stabilization policies in 1940-41, Baruch found himself frozen out of the administration despite over twenty years of advocacy of industrial preparedness for war. He made his "office" a park bench in Lafayette Square across from the White House where the press and dissident officials could easily find him. His suite at the Carlton Hotel, another block away, was known as a headquarters for military officials who used Baruch as a spokesman and lobbyist for their causes. His friends in Congress made him a regular witness at hearings that addressed economic problems. Thus, out of Baruch's frustration that his advice to President Roosevelt went unheeded, was born the reputation of America's "Park Bench Statesman."

In mid-1942, Roosevelt, confronted by a rubber shortage that demanded gasoline rationing and the creation of a synthetic-rubber industry, appointed Baruch to head a blue-ribbon panel consisting of James B. Conant and Karl T. Compton, presidents of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Baruch Rubber Survey Committee effectively publicized the need for rationing. Through the war Baruch continued to operate as an informal liaison, turning down offers to head the Office of Economic Stabilization while operating unofficially as a self-appointed troubleshooter for agency heads who sought his services in their bureaucratic battles. Seldom was his name out of the news, for there were few more skilled publicists than this hand-

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some, silver-haired, six-foot-four-inch erect septuagenarian. It seemed that everyone with a cause sought to enlist him in its behalf; who else was more of an elderly sage and oracle? Opinion polls confirmed what the press suspected, that Baruch's judgments earned the public trust as much as those of the President. And among the causes seeking to attach itself to the Baruch name was that of Zionism.

III

BARUCH did not invite the attention of Jews by design. He was a cosmopolitan and a secularist who personally considered his Jewishness the least important thing about him while at the same time cultivating his image as—in the words of Judge Joseph Proskauer—"the leading Jew in America." He had inherited his ambivalence toward Judaism from his parents. His mother, Belle Baruch, a daughter of the Confederacy, had been an observing Jew; his father, Dr. Simon Baruch, an immigrant, believed that he was an American before he was a Jew.

Bernard Baruch was a loving son who kept faith with both parents. He married an Episcopalian, allowed her to raise their three children in her church, and, good cosmopolitan that he was, professed strongly that he would rid the world of bigotry by forsaking his peculiar heritage. Partly out of love for his mother, he still closed his office and attended synagogue on the High Holy Days. But he was an agnostic and regarded any man with strong religious beliefs as either a charlatan or a fool. If he contributed generously to religious causes, he did so because he preferred their voluntary welfare activity to government-run welfare. If he favored Jewish philanthropic causes, he did so as a politician would, to maintain a base of support.

What sort of a Jew, then, was Baruch? A former associate answered the question by exclaiming, "A Jew? He was an anti-Semite." This was hyperbole, induced by the fact that many of Baruch's friends were themselves anti-Semites and because he avoided Jews who professed thir Jewishness in public. His Jewish Wall Street business associates were the Guggenheims and Eugene Meyer, Jr. Meyer, it has been written, "felt primarily American," not at all Jewish, married a Gentile woman whose "qualities could be a passport to a broader, fuller life," and associated with the German Jews in financial circles who disdained the Eastern European Jews on New York's Lower East Side. Baruch's Wall Street milieu also had trepidations about too many Jews concentrated in one seat of power. The investment banker, James P. Warburg, opposed Baruch's inclusion in the American delegation to the London Economic Conference of 1933; not only did Warburg consider Baruch an unsavory short-seller, but his addition to the group along with Warburg and Henry Morgenthau, Sr. would make it look like "an International Jewish Congress." Ironically, Baruch himself was so assimilated that he was nearly insensitive to the Jewishness of others unless they called it to his attention.

Baruch's credo required that everyone forswear his national or religious origins for an American identity. He disdained the "hyphenate" vote in American politics, and he claimed to be an American before being a Jew. He told the pundit Mark Sullivan, "I am never denying, but always stating the fact that I am a full-blooded Jew . . . and I take second place to no one in being a pure American and in my pure Americanism."

In his mind Americanism excluded bigotry, which he considered partly the product of benighted lower-class minds, best exemplified by the Ku Klux Klan, and partly due to the peculiarities of the victims themselves. (When cartoonists in hate sheets like Ford's *Dearborn Independent* caricatured Baruch, he complained that they "depict me as a man with hat in hand . . . as the most ugly and disagreeable Jew that they possibly can.") Among the higher classes, prejudice took the form of social discrimination, toward which Baruch was ambivalent. He could inquire as to the difference between anti-Semitism in the Harvard Club and that of the Klan and, in the same paragraph, approve the club's discrimination: "Mind you, I don't deny the right of any man to exclude from the club anybody he wishes. I do not quarrel with that whether they exclude the person for race, creed, color, fact, or fancy." Social discrimination by the upper classes was tolerable if it did not infringe upon principles of economic and political opportunity.

Baruch's faith in Americanism and liberal capitalism put the spirituality of the marketplace above that of any organized religion. But he valued church organizations that mobilized the voluntary welfare resources of the community. Some of his most fervent eulogies of Americanism and capitalism were delivered before Jewish or predominantly Jewish groups. Baruch used an invitation to address the launching of the United Jewish Appeal in 1946 to lecture Jews on why they ought to appreciate the United States. Their country, he said in the early cold war, was confronted with "a great political and philosophical issue—statism versus individualism." Philanthropies like UJA preserved "the system of personal initiative." It bothered him that so many Jews from Eastern Europe preferred government welfare services or even went so far as to embrace Communism or socialism. During the heyday of McCarthyism in the 1950's, Baruch secretly enlisted as a financial backer of the right-wing American Jewish Anti-Communist League. His contributions to the League began in 1953 during the controversy over the pending execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg; over the next decade he gave at least $10,000 to it without allowing himself to be publicly identified with the group. Yet he def-

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initely believed that its vigorous anti-Communism ought to be endorsed by American Jews.

By attaining prominence in American public life, Baruch did become something of a Disraeli to his fellow Jews. His accomplishments reflected well upon them. As early as World War I the estimable Jacob Schiff told Baruch, "To me personally the luster you are shedding upon our people is a source of personal satisfaction." There were then not many Jews in public life with whom other Jews could identify; a young Harry Golden knew when he met Baruch in the early 1920's that he was "in the presence of a great Jew." Anti-Semites made Baruch more important to Jews when they used him as an object for their tirades. Similarly, Baruch's Jewishness was turned to his advantage when Gentiles attributed the wisdom in his political pronouncements to his heritage. Thus, ordinary Americans urged Presidents to follow Baruch's advice because he sounded so much "like an ancient prophet of Israel"; a New York publisher found Baruch's wisdom "talmudic."

NOTHING tested Baruch's Jewishness as much as Zionism. On the one hand he dared not oppose it lest he appear unsympathetic to a great Jewish cause; on the other hand, his attitude toward it defined his Americanism. An American, he believed, could not be a Zionist. This sharply separated him from American Jews who considered hostility to Zionism tantamount to indifference to the fate of world Jewry.

Baruch always was concerned with the safety and welfare of European Jews, but he sought an American resolution to these concerns. He actually had been a contributor to Zionist organizations during 1914-18 because they were then among the few groups organized to give relief to the multitude of Jews uprooted by World War I. At that time he followed the lead of Jacob Schiff in eschewing the anti-Zionism of certain American Jews, and gave a well-publicized contribution of $10,000 to the Palestine Restoration Fund. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 he told a Polish delegate of his concern with "the Jewish question," warning him that "the Polish government should take some steps to stop the anti-Semitism" then rampant in that newly recreated country. He rejoiced in the British Balfour Declaration that promised to open Palestine to Jewish immigration, though he surely did not envision a Jewish state there. When Albert Einstein came to America in 1921 to raise funds for the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Baruch, who was invited by the scientist to a meeting, responded that he had to be out of town that day but added, "However, may I not come in some other time?" He could not, then, be accused of shunning Zionist causes.

Nevertheless, during the period of the destruction of European Jewry by the Nazis and the drive to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine, American Zionists could never count upon Baruch to close ranks with them. In general, they doubted his identification with Jewish causes. "I know that Bernie's an upstanding Jew," Felix Frankfurter once told Baruch's long-time friend, Herbert Bayard Swope, "but I sometimes wonder whether he isn't slightly kidding himself that he is in a different category, say, from Stephen Wise or Julian Mack. Have I ever told you the offhand answer I made when Walter [Lippmann] and I had adjoining desks in Newton Baker's office, and Walter, resenting the charge that Baker was surrounded by Jews, asked 'What is a Jew anyhow?'; 'Let me offer you this, Walter,' I replied, 'as a working definition: a Jew is a man whom non-Jews regard as a Jew.' "

Baruch always brought out the self-righteousness in Frankfurter, but it was true enough that Baruch was a Jew because the world defined him as one and because he sometimes valued the heritage. But other Jews could not be certain when it would suit Baruch to be considered one of them. In the words of a Jewish writer during the Holocaust, "From the Jewish point of view, Baruch has been what might be called a sleeper, not denying his Judaism, but making only glancing references to it."

In the late 1930's Baruch dabbled heavily in foreign affairs, but his ideas on resettlement of refugees from the Nazis called neither for opening America's gates to Europe's persecuted Jews nor for relocating them in Zion. He certainly was not about to add them to the rolls of America's unemployed during the depression. He helped a few Jewish professionals find homes in America, and he gave aid to his father's family still living in Europe.

In 1937 it appeared to Baruch that Hitler's only solution to the Jewish question was "to try to throw three million Jews out of Poland!" and the magnitude of that project did not seem to him to necessitate an immediate American response. Roosevelt convened meetings with Baruch and other advisers on the refugee question in the White House during the spring of 1938, but nothing was forthcoming aside from expressions of official concern. Baruch's closest political friend then, Senator Jimmy Byrnes, urged the President to seek legislation to increase German immigration quotas as "the best evidence we could give to Hitler of our sincerity" in protesting his racial policies and giving Jews something more than "mere expressions of our sincerity." But Baruch kept hmself aloof from protests and action which he feared would "only make things worse for Jews over there." Although he wanted to save the Jews of Europe, he did not want to bring them here. In this he was not alone among prominent American Jews.

Baruch's solution to the refugee crisis conformed to his Americanism. He advocated the creation of a "United States of Africa" as a haven for *all* of

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Europe's victims of oppression and poverty. Consisting of the Belgian Congo, Portuguese Angola, Kenya, and Tanganyika, the "United States of Africa" would be a British protectorate, thereby adding to Whitehall's control of central Africa. Baruch pointedly did not advocate a Zionist homeland in Africa, even though most of Europe's refugees in the late 1930's were Jewish; his pioneers in Africa would be "all kinds of people [and] not Jews alone." (It should be observed that this concept of a non-Zionist sanctuary also appealed to presidential counsel Samuel Rosenman, who did not want a "world ghetto" for Jews.)

The scheme was doomed when such right-wing Republicans as Representative Hamilton Fish of New York picked up the plan in an effort to embarrass the White House. Nevertheless, Baruch did not abandon it so easily, and even after World War II he revived the idea of a "United States of Africa" as the most likely way of bringing both liberal capitalism and Europe's displaced persons to the dark continent.

As Louis Brandeis once commented, Baruch "would be more likely to consider colonization by Jews on some undiscovered planet than Palestine." Still, since he was one of America's most prominent Jews, Zionists sought his support by appealing to his conscience. David Ben-Gurion once had the temerity to tell Baruch that as a Jew he was obligated to support the state of Israel; Baruch retorted that he was "more concerned with the Stars and Stripes than the Star of David." Likewise, Baruch told Chaim Weizmann that he would not help Zionists because "I do not think myself a Jew." (Weizmann retorted, "Come Armageddon, you will be counted only as a Jew.")

DESPITE this evident hostility to Zionism, Baruch kept Zionists returning to him for potential aid to their cause in the form of influence or contributions. They often had to endure his lectures on how their purposes or methods were in error, but they were shrewd enough to recognize that he would not entirely reject their pleas. Thus, in 1943, after Baruch had given a million dollars to various war relief agencies, Rabbi Stephen Wise appealed to him to earmark a contribution to resettle Jewish refugees in Palestine. Baruch eventually gave Wise a thousand dollars, but not before lecturing him on the importance of succoring refugees "who want to work out their destiny, not segregated, but alongside others working for civilization."

During the war the Zionists wanted Roosevelt to bring pressure upon the British to ease restrictions upon Jewish immigration to Palestine, but the situation there was complicated by Arab resistance, British ambitions for Near Eastern oil, and State Department reluctance to incur Arab wrath by assisting Zionists. Roosevelt himself was unsympathetic. Before Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud of Saudia Arabia in 1945, Baruch contacted the Zionist publicist Ben Hecht and urged that he "call off further criticisms of President Roosevelt and his administration—until you hear from me again." He asserted that Roosevelt's forthcoming trip abroad "will settle the Jewish problems in the Near East to my satisfaction—and yours." However, Roosevelt's utterances following the Ibn Saud meeting were so pro-Arab as to alienate both the Zionists and Baruch. Hecht then called Baruch to inform him that the moratorium on Zionist agitation was ended. Baruch responded, "I have had a two-hour talk with President Roosevelt about the Jews and the Jewish problem. I have spoken also to Governor Dewey on the same subject. I can only tell you as a result of these talks that, despite my having been a lifelong Democrat, I would rather trust my American Jewishness in Mr. Dewey's hands than in Mr. Roosevelt's."

In early 1946 Baruch's sole acknowledgment of Europe's Jewish remnant was a declaration that "a place must be found for all displaced peoples of every religion and race who cry out from hunger and from despair of their future." He did not then suggest a place—or agree with the Zionists on Palestine. Even so, he was not about to ignore an idea that was making history without him. He advised the Zionist leader Abba Hillel Silver that if he wanted Washington's support for a Jewish homeland he would have to "get the Jews of Brooklyn and the Bronx muttering in their beards" against a Truman administration that vacillated in its Near East policy. Democratic setbacks in 1946 elections, along with Zionist petitions in behalf of free Jewish migration to Palestine, provided the sort of "mutterings" that showed Jews were prepared to fight for a homeland. Baruch was impressed. Once the Zionists had gone pleading to the great Baruch; now it was he who went to Ben Hecht to declare, "I'm on your side. . . . The only way the Jews will ever get anything is by fighting for it. I'd like you to think of me as one of your Jewish fighters in the tall grass with a long gun. I've always done my best work that way, out of sight."

Although it was true that he certainly had a talent and a record for effective lobbying in the corridors of Washington, Baruch seldom could resist using his prestige as America's oracular elder statesman, and he knew that it would be most useful then to Jewry. "As an American and, after that, as a Jew—I have been shocked to the heart by the treatment accorded the pre-war and postwar refugees, particularly the Jews," he told an audience in late 1946. "I am not a political Zionist. But . . . I deplore and condemn the shilly-shallying and weathervaning of the British and, too, the American government regarding the right of haven that was to be accorded these unfortunates under the Balfour Declaration."

Baruch's outrage was sincere enough, as was his concern for refugees. But his public condemnation was mostly targeted against the Labor government

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in Britain that had inherited the protectorate in Palestine. In part Baruch was employing the issue of Palestine as an ideological weapon. The Laborites, who in 1945 had ousted the Conservative government of Winston Churchill, Baruch's close friend since World War I, were bent upon nationalization of British industries and instituting other plans which Baruch categorized as a pattern of worldwide "totalization." He was never hesitant to chastise Britain's socialist leadership. And his espousal of refugee havens, whether in Zionist Palestine or his never-wholly-abandoned "United States of Africa," was also intended to bring "civilization"—i.e., capitalism —to undeveloped areas of the world. Finally, such refugee havens might serve as a positive lure for "those left behind the Iron Curtain."

WHEN the United Nations partitioned Palestine and guaranteed the establishment of a Jewish state, Rabbi Silver acclaimed Baruch one of "the leaders of American public opinion who have given their support to this noble cause." Baruch increasingly lived up to Silver's praise. "I know the arguments, pro and con, for Palestine," he told an old friend. "The arguments now are of no avail because the Rubicon has been crossed." Baruch did not mind being on the losing side of a controversy over economic policy when he was right, but on social and political issues he was apt to land eventually on the winning side—lest he cease to be a leader of public opinion. Impressed by the Zionists' determination and their ability to muster political support, he privately warned Secretary of Defense James V. Forrestal, who was afraid of alienating Arab oil producers, that the Democrats would lose politically if they played the British game of arming Arabs to crush the Jews in Palestine. Baruch also used his influence with Secretary of State George C. Marshall, who owed him political debts, to gain United States backing for extending Israeli territory to the Negev desert despite British objections.

So moved was Silver by Baruch's 1948 activities in behalf of Zionism that he sought to make the elder statesman UJA's honorary chairman; but Baruch, never one to accept such use of his name by any organization, declined on the ostensible grounds that he could "be of more help on the outside." The Israelis and their American friends sought him out for lobbying in behalf of bills to aid the fledgling government, but Baruch resisted their blandishments. American Jews were told that Baruch considered Israel just another foreign government.

His belated assistance to the Zionist cause had been predicated upon humanitarian sympathy for the refugees and an expedient willingness to hector British socialists. In the 1950's, however, he partially reversed himself as he began to claim that he had been a long-time supporter of Israel, which he now praised as "the greatest spiritual adventure for 2,000 years." But he never wholeheartedly succumbed to the American Jewish community's enthusiasm for Israel. Disliking the sectarianism of Jews, he considered himself an enlightened universal humanist. To the end of his days "the leading Jew in America" would eschew direct public identification with most Jewish causes.

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Getting Ethics

William J. Bennett

A NEW spirit of moralism is stalking the culture. Increasingly these days one looks through one or another of the professional trade magazines—of the bar, of the medical profession, or even of business—to find not accounts of new developments in the field, but articles about, pleas for, and speeches dealing with the ethics of the profession. Public disenchantment with professionals is cited, reference is made if not to outright criminal behavior, then at least to the generally indifferent standards of many who serve the public. Over and over again the call goes out, in a litany grown familiar by now, to "sensitize" managers, practitioners, lawyers, to the "ethical dimensions" of their work. Along with this comes a proliferation of "workshops" and weekend retreats with the aim of awakening—between Friday and Sunday—a greater appreciation of life's ethical demands.

One remarkable aspect of the current preoccupation with ethics is the speed with which it has become institutionalized. Suddenly a whole new breed of moral experts—made up primarily of professors and psychologists—has emerged in American life, equipped with a vocabulary and methodology all its own, and perpetually on call, like some ethicist fire brigade, to minister to one or another moral dilemma of contemporary life.

Helped by substantial government and foundation grants, these new "values experts" seem to be everywhere, as apt to turn up in the operating room as in the undergraduate lounge. They counsel doctors and medical students on the ethics of abortion or the treatment of the terminally ill, they are called in to law schools to rescue courses on legal ethics from profound student indifference, they are invited to corporate boardrooms to raise questions about the dilemmas inherent in investment policy or increasing corporate expenditures for research and development. Above all, they are entrenched in the elementary and secondary schools, those most vulnerable and victimized of contexts, where every new trend is first to gain a foothold.

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Thousands of schoolchildren have by now taken part in one or another version of the "values-clarification" exercises devised by Sidney Simon of the University of Massachusetts, or the "cognitive moral development" regimen of Harvard's Lawrence Kohlberg—programs whose professed aim is to stimulate ethical awareness in children while avoiding any taint of what the program guidelines call "moral indoctrination." Whether or not programs like these succeed (or deserve to), they are now in many places securely at home from kindergarten through high school, and the assumptions behind them constitute the reigning orthodoxy in the field of ethical instruction today. A look at these assumptions is therefore in order.

A good place to start is a new series on ethics and the professions recently issued by the prestigious Hastings Center Institute of Society, Ethics, and the Life Sciences. The series—which enlisted the cooperation of many distinguished contributors to the fields of philosophy, professional education, and public policy—consists of nine separate monographs on the ethical education of lawyers, journalists, businessmen, social scientists, engineers, and policy-makers. Of these, it is clearly the lead pamphlet, *The Teaching of Ethics in Higher Education* (the only one honored as a Hastings Report),* which is the most important, providing the overview and setting the tone for the rest of the project. A collaborative effort involving no fewer than twenty authors, it is also the volume which most clearly bears the imprimatur of the Hastings Center, since its preface was written by the project's co-directors, Daniel Callahan and Sissela Bok. As such, it is especially worthy of examination.

The authors begin by stating their unqualified support both for ethics and for the teaching of ethics, but with one crucial reservation: like their colleagues in secondary- and elementary-school values programs, they do not approve of traditional ways of carrying on the enterprise of moral education: "We are attracted to the devising of ethical codes and principles," they assert, "but suspicious of any move that might point in the direction of moral indoctrination or any ethical party line."

* The Hastings Center, 103 pp., $5.00.

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Having established this conviction, which runs like a unifying thread throughout the report (and whch the authors claim is a conviction shared by most Americans), they go on to account for the current upsurge of interest in the teaching of ethics. Their description of the current malaise is familiar enough: "symptoms of a moral vacuum in our society, [and] a sense of moral drift"; "concern about juvenile delinquency, [and] about white-collar crime"; "the absence of fixed and firm guidelines for both personal and institutional behavior"; growing criticism of moral behavior within the professions. All of these factors, in the authors' view, "represent strong symptoms of a society in the throes of considerable moral turmoil." They have created strong pressure "within the society, within the professions, and within the universities to confront issues of ethics and morality more squarely."

The authors next proceed to evaluate the state of ethics-teaching in the U.S. today. Though there are over 11,000 courses in ethics currently being offered at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the authors maintain that this number is insufficient and—more important—that the quality of these courses is inadequate. They argue that a new and explicit method of instruction is required because the old approach—in which the teacher's task was primarily to "exhort, admonish, and inspire students"—no longer works.

One reason it no longer works is that there was too great a contrast in the old days between "the bland rhetoric of the classroom and the realities outside" (so that in the 19th century the subject of slavery, for example, was ignored by many who taught such courses). Another reason is that the unified curriculum of the old days —where "the entire college experience was meant to be preeminently an experience in character development and the moral life"—is now outmoded. Schools are increasingly in the business of specialization, the university has become more and more fragmented, and these factors, along with the technical emphasis of professional schools, have "conspired to push moral reflection to the sidelines."

To restore ethics to its proper place, the authors wish to see the kinds of courses that will help students engage in serious reflection about morality in society. They want students to address such questions as: "What ought to be the goals of a society, and how should different societies conduct themselves toward each other?" "What is the nature of a just society, and what is the relationship between human liberty and goals of justice?" "In what circumstances, if any, should laws be protested or even disobeyed?" In encouraging students to "wrestle" with these questions, however, one major caveat must be observed: it must be made very clear to them that "our personal values will reflect the values of different ethical strands in society and the moral ideals of various ethical theories and perspectives: and the same is true of the values and moralities of societies."

In other words, students must be given to understand that our own ethical systems and moral preferences are simply one of many possibilities—no better or worse than other such systems, but simply different—and students must be encouraged to value and respect the ethical systems of others. Over and over again this caution about tolerance toward the values of others is stipulated in the report, to a point where it becomes almost comic. Listing their own five goals for the pursuit of ethics, for example, the authors feel obliged to add the proviso that "the goals we have proposed . . . do not entail any conclusion that the details of some moral systems, ethical theories, or moral values are more correct than others."

So far as the goals themselves are concerned, they are unexceptionable to the point of blandness (Stimulating the Moral Imagination, Recognizing Ethical Issues, Developing Analytical Skills, etc., etc.) but there is one striking, though deliberate, omission. The possibility of actually influencing individual behavior for the better is nowhere mentioned. The authors explain that the decision to omit such a recommendation was "the most troublesome issue we had to face," and did not come easily to them, but they finally concluded that "changing student behavior" is not "an appropriate explicit goal for a course in ethics." Why not? Because "to bring about such changes, professors might engage in highly questionable techniques of manipulation. These would not only be inappropriate; they would also beg some important moral questions—about what constitutes improvement, for instance—that are precisely those that students should be free to debate."

Once again, the ethical relativism which is the ruling principle of this document rears its head, along with that obsessive fear of "indoctrination" which is its corollary. Above all, courses in ethics must not be permitted to become "occasions for indoctrination," for such indoctrination might serve to "undermine the existing plurality of values," might even lead to the heresy of considering one ethical theory intrinsically better than another.

True, examples of this kind of indoctrination are not exactly rampant in the doubting schools and colleges of our polity at the moment, and the authors admit that they "have encountered no one teaching ethics who declared his or her express purpose to be that of indoctrination." Yet they do manage to come up with something: "At a few denominational and other types of institutions," it seems, "teachers reported that they were expected to advance the specific values of those institutions." Fortified by this rather spe-

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cialized example, the authors conclude their report by reiterating the convictions they announced at the beginning: "professors have a duty to seek impartiality"; "the greatest worry is focused on either religious or political indoctrination"; a proper course in ethics is one that will enable students to "critique [*sic*], and to be in a position to reject, not only their present moral convictions, but also those of the teacher."

Finally, the authors emphasize that there is a "most important general need" for more programs along the lines of the vision of ethics-teaching here described, and strongly recommend their implementation. One hopes that this recommendation will not be heeded—not because there is no need for moral instruction in our society, but because the vision of ethics subscribed to by the twenty-two authors of the Hastings Report is likely to make things worse, not better.

AT THE simplest level, this is true because the kind of ethical instruction recommended in this report would have no effect on the moral behavior of individuals exposed to it, and hence would be of no benefit to that larger society outside "in the throes of moral turmoil." This kind of wrestling with moral problems never really engages the student in a way that makes any demands of him—it is "issues" and "problems" that are addressed here, not individuals. The students can never be urged or exhorted to do, or to be, better, first out of respect for the prohibition against indoctrination, and second because what constitutes improvement is itself a matter of "debate." Thus, whatever the venality or cynicism of young professionals or college students, such a program by its own self-limitation cannot do very much about it. By its own terms, therefore, it is irrelevant.

But if such a program has no positive effect, it can have a negative one: to provide the cynic with the terms whereby he may justify his baseness. A program of moral education like this one leaves ethical matters just where the moral cynic wants them—perpetually suspended in debate, in controversy, in "wrestling." By the terms of this program, he can insist on tolerance from others for his point of view, pointing out that he merely reflects the values "of a different ethical strand in society."

The sheer emptiness of this vision of ethics, its unwillingness to assert that some things are right and others wrong, thus becomes an unwitting ally of moral indifference, and worse. No challenge to the hypothetical young knave is offered here; there is no one on the premises to shake a finger or a head with confidence, no adult to tell the child to get his fingers out of someone else's soup, no one who *knows* what improvement is. What is needed most is most warned against: an adult willing to teach (the Latin word, incidentally, is *docere*, which happens to be the root of the word "indoctrination"). If we take the authors at their word, in their "vision" of ethics nothing exemplary can happen except by error because nothing exemplary is allowed to happen by the rules of the game.

The authors make a point of criticizing "the bland rhetoric" of college presidents in earlier times (never to be forgiven the sin of having lived in earlier times), but what they offer in its place, as a supposed corrective to "moral drift" and "the absence of fixed and firm guidelines for behavior," is the very model of moral drift and intellectual flabbiness. One wonders how the authors of this report would reply to John Witherspoon, president of Princeton and an unabashed dogmatist, who harangued the young James Madison and his classmates over and over again: "Gentlemen, do not live useless and die contemptible." Would they challenge and "critique" him?

But though it may serve an analytic purpose to imagine the effects of such a program on a classroom full of moral cynics, it is, of course, unfair to think of the average student in this way. Typically, the students one deals with at the college, graduate, and professional level today are not cynics at all but simply young people unsure and confused about how they should behave and what they should believe. To encourage students like these—members of the generation that grew up in the late 60's and 70's—to a bold questioning of childhood beliefs, parental dicta, or traditional notions of right and wrong hardly warrants a medal for valor, since such questioning is entirely routine to them—it has been their constant diet since birth, with what dubious effects we are now witnessing. What is the point, then, of encouraging them to doubt still further and more deeply in the name of avoiding "moral indoctrination"?

IN FACT, if one studies this document with any care at all, one realizes that the authors are not nearly so opposed to "indoctrination" as they claim to be, so long as it is indoctrination along lines they approve. The obvious weighting of the report in favor of "questioning" and "critiquing" traditional values rather than nurturing them—let alone working actively to affirm them in a hostile world—is itself a form of indoctrination, whether admitted to or not. Even more explicitly, when the authors refer in passing to the "injustice, racism, sexism, and exploitation" at present abroad in the land, they are saying something political, whether they acknowledge it or not. True, this characterization of American society is so commonplace by now it passes for self-evident, but it is nonetheless a political doctrine for all that (and nowhere questioned, challenged, or "critiqued" in this report).

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Many intellectuals these days criticize American attempts to influence events in other countries in the direction of our own ideals. Very often they do so on the grounds that such intervention violates the integrity of other peoples, who have a right to preserve their own culture through the generations whether or not it conforms to our own sense of things. But when it comes to the question of American ideals, values, and traditions, many of these same intellectuals are not nearly so generous. American cultural and moral integrity is not deemed worthy of the same effort at preservation.

Heeding the counsel of such "experts," we have now adopted educational programs in this country that seem to be aimed quite simply at cultural suicide. A child starting school in America in the 1980's can now begin his education with "instruction" in values-clarification at the elementary level, wherein he will learn "that there is no right and wrong" and that "life is a lovely banquet" in which he can take what he likes. Then he can go on to high school and engage in "cognitive moral development" where he will learn to question all forms of authority, particularly that of the family, whose "conditioning," as this report calls it, he will learn to recognize for what it is. From there, he can go on to college where he will learn to question the "permanent validity"of American cultural ideals—that is, if he has ever heard of them.

It has reached a point in academic and educational circles where one is rightly more suspicious of those with ethics on their minds and "values" on their tongues than of those who disdain to speak of such things at all, preferring to take their morality, as C.S. Lewis put it, "internally." One of the most serious ethical problems of our time has become the fad of the new ethics and its defenders.

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The Real Avant-Garde

Pearl K. Bell

NOVELS of protest—protest against oppression and injustice—have invariably taken the form of brutal realism, from a Zola to a Solzhenitsyn, since they seek to document horrors with a wealth of detail and fact. But questions of form apart, since the realistic novel is an "old" form, how long can one go on piling detail on detail, in a mounting demonstration of evil? Writers of protest have tried other modes, such as satire, yet satire requires that a reader have more than a passing knowledge of the facts about an inhumane regime. (How can anyone lacking intimate knowledge of the Soviet Union, for example, fully appreciate the cunning ingenuity and deadly accuracy of Alexander Zinoviev's satirical assault on Soviet society in *The Yawning Heights*?) Other writers, preeminently Kafka, have given us a sense of the individual's helplessness against incomprehensible authority through surreal abstractions of reality: one remembers *In the Penal Colony*, and the terrible machine that slowly executes the condemned by tattooing his sentence on his back. More recently, principally from writers who have lived and suffered through the experience of Communist regimes, there has come a new form which might be called the literature of compression.

This kind of imaginative writing about the world of Eastern Europe attempts to convey the airless, claustrophobic nature of its life by condensing the conventional apparatus of character, action, and judgment into a small and heightened span. It suggests visual actuality with fragmented images and shreds of shadowy detail rather than capacious description, and conveys the writer's loathing of his rulers in oblique metaphors rather than demonstrative statements. An extreme example of such imaginative compression is Andrei Sinyavsky's *A Voice from the Chorus*, a babble of disembodied voices in the Soviet prison camps which dispenses with everything but the sound of the soul, and draws its intensity from Sinyavsky's concentration upon what is said, not on who is speaking. The voices alone register the truth that, despite the physical discipline the prisoners' bodies must endure, their voices are free to bear witness to their humanity.

In his novel *The City Builder*, the Hungarian writer George Konrád devises a different means of annealing the conventional material of the literary imagination into a hard knot that will register moral indignation without the amplitude of leisurely description and dialogue.* By concentrating single-mindedly on the gnomic introspection of a nameless city planner, Konrád pares the flesh of his book down to a bone of enraged abstraction that comes close to denying the very being of literature, as though the end of such economy must be silence.

What undoubtedly accounts in part for the self-limitation of such writing is not only the infamous hypocrisy of socialist realism, which prettifies and denies the truth, but the unnatural degree of vigilance that nonconforming writers under Communism must maintain if they have any instinct for literary—and physical—survival without capitulation. To live under the shutters of threat deprives a writer of all patience for the cumulative pace and casual clutter of conventional narratives that stop to linger over the color of a woman's eyes or the cut of her clothes.

A WRITER like Milan Kundera—who was allowed to leave Czechoslovakia only five years ago and whose adult life has been branded by the alternating favor and disfavor of successive Communist regimes since 1948—seems, even after he settled in the West, to be driven by nervous urgency, a sense of dwindling time. He has small tolerance for the voluminous recreation of surface appearances because the minatory ghost of history constantly reminds him that the real world is brutally unlike the way it looks. In Kundera's new novel, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, which has been superbly translated by Michael Heim,† dancers in a circle become the symbolic image of the ideological power of Communism. A circle which magically protects the true believer from the perils of skepticism is also a circle that suffocates the individual dancers in a closed ring of solidarity. As Kundera dryly remarks, "I too once danced in a ring. . . . Then one day I said something I would better have left unsaid. I was expelled from the party and had to leave the circle." In the five novels of Milan Kundera which have so far been published in the United States, we can trace the path of the dissident writer: from protest, to comedy and satire, to surrealist compression.

The life of this brilliantly resourceful Czech writer followed a well-worn pattern even before he was forced out of the magic circle and fell into the void reserved for intellectual heretics. Milan Kundera was born in the provincial city of Brno in 1929, the son of a concert pianist who was rector of the local conservatory of music. A precocious convert to modernism, he began writing surrealist poetry at about the time he first joined the Communist party, at the age of eighteen, soon after the end of World War II. But he was so fiercely dedicated to the making of a socialist utopia that he was willing to sacrifice literary modernism to the greater political cause; in his

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* See my discussion of Konrád and *The City Builder* in "A Novelist Under Communism," COMMENTARY, March 1978.

† Knopf, 228 pp., $10.95.

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youth, as he later recalled, he naively believed that "a period of cultural darkness . . . represented a necessary phase in the liberation of the people."

But such sloganizing orthodoxy did not sit well with his incurably ironic temperament, and in 1950 Kundera was expelled from the party for harboring "hostile thoughts." Six years later, after Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin at the Twentieth Party Congress, Kundera was caught up in another turn of the political revolving door and reinstated in the party, which allowed him for the next decade to teach at the Prague Film Institute, publish a prolific abundance of poetry, plays, and literary criticism, and live as an officially respectable citizen—until he began speaking out at the Writers' Union in defense of intellectual liberty and publicly attacked the repressive Novotny regime. His fate was sealed with the publication in 1967 of his first novel, *The Joke*.

More polemical and expansive than anything Kundera has written since, *The Joke* is a straightforward political narrative (greatly enriched, however, by the author's psychological acumen) exposing the excesses of the Czech inquisitors during the Stalinist years. In the relatively halcyon days leading to the Prague Spring, that pitifully brief renascence of freedom which ended with the Russian occupation in August 1968, *The Joke*, with its unsparing account of the malevolent dogmatism that infected the Prague universities in the 50's, was passed by the censors and published.

In this novel, a university student, Ludvík Jahn, recklessly forgets that the Communist faithful are humorless, and pays dearly for his lapse. When Jahn sends a larky postcard to his prune-souled girlfriend—"Optimism is the opium of the people! The healthy atmosphere stinks! Long live Trotsky!"—she passes the heretical document along to the authorities. Though he protests that the postcard was only meant as a joke, Jahn is expelled from the university and the party, drafted into an army unit for suspected political deviants, and condemned to hard labor in the coal mines for the next seven years. During this purgatory, adrift in a desert of exhaustion and emptiness, Jahn begins to realize that his former infatuation with Communism stemmed not from a genuine concern for "the future of mankind," but from a romantic illusion "of being close to the *helm of history* . . . drunk with having jumped on its back and being able to feel it beneath us."

Such grandiose apostrophes to the abstract gods of revolution are anathema to Milan Kundera, who welcomes any chance to stick a thumb in the eye of apparatchiks declaiming the opposite of what they mean and do. It seems safe to guess that by the time he finished his anti-Stalinist protest novel, Kundera had grown so weary of the Marxist kitsch pouring out of every loudspeaker in Czechoslovakia that he wanted to banish politics from his fiction altogether.

REMARKABLY, one last book of Kundera's was published in Czechoslovakia after the Russian takeover—the collection of comic stories about sexual foibles which he characteristically titled *Laughable Loves*—but soon the axe fell again, and this time with finality. Once more he was expelled from the party, and not simply fired from his teaching job but forbidden to work anywhere else. All his books vanished from libraries and bookstores, 80 percent of his foreign royalties were confiscated in punitive taxes, and, as he writes in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, he became "a man erased from history, literary reference books, even the telephone book." In 1975 he was finally granted an exit visa and settled in France, and last year, after his new novel was published in Paris, the Czech government became so incensed that they completed the long process of official annihilation and revoked his citizenship.

Though Kundera's experience has hardly been unique, he nonetheless continued to write with astonishing virtuosity after being consigned to official oblivion, as though the harsh treatment he was subjected to, the official denial of his existence as a man and a writer, paradoxically bred a defiant creative vigor that no government could silence. As Kundera pointed out in an interview some years ago:

> The Western intellectual finds it easy to deny his own values and to mock centuries-old gardens. For him, it is only play-acting. But the intellectual in our half of Europe lives in a quite different situation: he has already been suppressed many times. . . . He has been rejected theoretically, practically, even economically. And thus he was finally forced into a situation that left him no alternative but to begin to understand his own importance, his own lot, to start defending his own liberty and the cultivation of the gardens of the mind.

Most of the stories in *Laughable Loves* crackle with irony, but the comic entanglements of his characters are so precisely observed, and related with such a winning air, that in the end this Czech *La Ronde* is touching as well as funny. Kundera has none of Schnitzler's world-weary cynicism about sex, and he seems determined to show that there is just as much erotic jealousy, narcissism, promiscuity, and absurdity in a Communist society as there is in decadent capitalist countries—and a good thing, too. Even when sex turns to farce under Kundera's sardonic scrutiny, it remains a solacing oasis of disorder in an ironclad life. What he slyly sets out to demonstrate is that even though socialist realism is too high-principled to be bothered with the sexual diversions of everyday life, *he* finds sex entirely worthy of literary attention, whether he is mocking a paunchy Casanova long past his prime or a couple of frantic Lotharios so easily distracted by new quarries that they never consummate any campaign of seduction. Though Kundera is astringently anti-romantic, his laughter is not mean-spirited nor his irony scornful. In *Laughable Loves* he is no longer protesting a ruthless political system, but looking with canny amusement at that enigmatic and quirky arena of desire shared by all of humankind.

IN A totalitarian world, however, everything soon finds its political level, and Kundera, under constant surveillance by the watchdogs hoping to starve him into a public confession, could no more keep politics out of his literary work than he could escape its tentacles in his life.

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A novel published in France in 1973 (but not in Czechoslovakia) moves farther away from the conventions of realistic fiction than anything Kundera had written earlier. *Life is Elsewhere* satirizes the pretensions of a miserably untalented poet, Jaromil, who is caught up in the revolutionary ecstasy of 1948 and by accident elevated into a People's Literary Hero. Emboldened by his new-found eminence, this self-deluded mediocrity becomes an informer for the police while grinding out his doggerel about love and beauty. It is clear that in this mordant portrait of the artist, Kundera was satirizing the cultural infantilism and backwardness that he sees as endemic to Czechoslovakia and whose most pervasive symptom is the "lyrical" approach to life and politics.

A country that did not come into existence until the 20th century, and whose culture and languages were impoverished by centuries of foreign domination, Czechoslovakia has in Kundera's view been forced too often to undertake new beginnings and thus failed to become part of the mainstream of European culture. Under its Communist rulers it has remained culturally stunted, and Prague, as he bitterly remarks in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, is now a literal embodiment of Kafka's prophetic vision—"a city without memory." The Czech passion for lyrical poetry, Kundera believes, is a sign of puerility because such poetry "is a realm in which any statement is immediately accorded veracity." During the Stalinist years, this poetic enthusiasm induced a general haze of gullibility and innocence that blinded the Czechs to the reality of a world in which people were being jailed and tormented, and this seems to be the object of Kundera's satire. Unfortunately his contempt for the Czech devotion to lyric poetry never acquires convincing satiric clarity in *Life is Elsewhere*, at least not for readers unfamiliar with the peculiarities of Czechoslovakia's cultural and political development and thus unable to respond intelligently to the novel's complex motivation.

AFTER going into exile, Kundera wrote a strange comedy, *The Farewell Party*, whose deceptively frivolous story is surprisingly hospitable to serious ideas about the psychology of political belief and the capricious impulses of human folly which can suddenly transform farce into calamity. The novel is set in a health resort outside of Prague, where the eccentric Dr. Skreta dispenses a magic cure for infertility from his private sperm-bank. On the surface, *The Farewell Party* pretends to be nothing more than a light-hearted romp about a philandering jazz trumpeter and his Machiavellian scheme for shedding a pregnant mistress. But the spa is soon revealed to be a bizarre microcosm of the world at large, complete with comic saints and righteous sinners, disenchanted politicians and jealous wives.

With great agility, Kundera packs an extraordinary variety of moods and genres into this short and ostensibly inconsequential jest: bedroom farce, romantic love, melodrama, high comedy of manners, philosophical rumination. It is a ballet of incongruities, and as such would seem to be Kundera's celebration of life as disorder, which thrives only in freedom, as against a world of inquisitors and informers driven, as one character defines it, by "the longing for order, a desire to turn the human world into an inorganic one, where everything would function perfectly and work on schedule, subordinated to a supraperson al system." Though the word Communism never appears in this novel, and the spa seems to exist in cloud-cuckoo land, Kundera's pretense of comic inconsequence is undercut by the kind of pointed intelligence that is all the more affecting for being so offhand.

WHAT is immediately striking about Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, his most recent work, is the bold authority that has enabled him to work out a genuinely innovative way of expressing, not representing, the reality of his past life in his homeland. He has completely rejected the traditional, by now well-worn and creatively unprofitable ways of writing about inhumanity and exile, and has drawn instead on the vitality of the unexpected and the concentrated imagery ordinarily found in poetry. It is a difficult and demanding book, which is not to say that Kundera indulges in the feckless obscurity of synthetic modernism, but neither is he willing to ease the reader's task. His fantasy requires a willingness to suspend the expectations we bring to realistic narrative.

Though Kundera calls this book "a novel in the form of variations," it is more accurately read as a group of stories loosely connected by the elegiac and sardonic meditations of the author on his past and the imperatives of memory. The elusiveness of memory, and the compulsion it becomes for those who must live in exile, is a central theme, most powerfully developed in "Lost Letters" (the second "Lost Letters"—there are two chapters thus titled, as there are two called "The Angels"). Though so much of Kundera's rumination about his former life in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* is drenched in the poisonous spume of East European politics, he poignantly conveys how the sorrow of exile from one's homeland, even though life there had become intolerable, is an inescapable price of freedom.

In "Lost Letters," a young widow, Tamina, who escaped with her husband from Czechoslovakia some years before his premature death, keeps spending most of her pitiful salary as a waitress on telephone calls to her mother-in-law in Prague. She is plagued by the mortality of memory, and is desperately anxious to retrieve a package of letters, photographs, and notebooks that she and her husband left behind, because "the past is growing paler and paler." The more strenuously she tries to summon up her husband's face, to recapture the vanished years of their happy marriage, the more everything seems to fade. Tamina feels that unless she can hold those letters and notebooks in her hands once again, she too will begin to blur and vanish forever.

Free of any hint of sentimentality, Kundera's portrait of Tamina, as she reaches out toward anyone who might be able to smuggle out the letters and thus allow her to salvage the past, captures the dissociated nature of homelessness with agonizing fidelity. Like that other great poet of exile, Vladimir Nabokov, who called his autobiography

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Speak, Memory, Kundera knows that the only lifeline is the struggle not to forget, that "the future is an apathetic void of no interest to anyone. The past is full of life. . . ."

This struggle against oblivion assumes a more oblique form in "The Angels," a story in which Kundera takes enormous technical risks without faltering. It opens with a vignette of two dull-witted American girls, in a summer course on the Riviera, reading Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* with the literal-minded humorlessness of Ludvík Jahn's girlfriend, then shifts abruptly to autobiography, as Kundera remembers the time he "lost the privilege of working," and the young editor of a popular magazine arranged to have him write an astrology column under a pseudonym. In a quick cinematic cut he captures the quality of Communist orthodoxy in the brilliant image of a tightly knit ring of dancers, and suddenly the writer is engulfed by the memory of a day in 1950 when Milada Horakova, a leader of the Socialist party, and Zavis Kalandra, the Czech surrealist poet, were hanged in Prague for supposedly plotting to overthrow the regime. Among Kalandra's friends were André Breton and Paul Eluard, the surrealist poet who was a member of the French Communist party. But when Breton asked Eluard to protest Kalandra's death sentence, he refused:

> Eluard was too busy dancing in the gigantic ring encircling Paris, Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Sofia, and Athens, encircling all the socialist countries and all the Communist parties of the world; too busy reciting his beautiful poems about joy and brotherhood. . . . And as I walked through the streets of Prague passing rings of laughing, dancing Czechs, I knew I belonged to Kalandra, not to them, to Kalandra who had also broken away from the circular trajectory and fallen, fallen, fallen. . . .

As he recalls Eluard's betrayal of his friend, Kundera envisions this ring of happy, singing believers suddenly leaving the ground and floating into the heavens like a band of angels, glowing with innocence and purity, and blind to the evil of the world outside their unbroken ring of faith. From this brilliant fantasy Kundera with no warning drops us back to earth and the young editor who had jeopardized her job by providing him with work. The police were soon tipped off, as they inevitably are in a society that rewards informers, and she too lost the privilege of working anywhere. With this unbearably guilty memory, Kundera brings "The Angels" to its grim end.

The firing of the young editor is the core of the story, yet without the startling shifts from fantasy to reality and back again, this unhappy episode would seem just another among thousands of such stories we have heard about Eastern Europe. The boldness with which Kundera cuts back and forth among the different levels—from history to autobiography to the apparition of soaring angels—transfigures the familiar with a power entirely his own. Through this triumphant act of the imagination, Kundera has made his experience of non-being an ineradicable part of our consciousness.

One returns from Milan Kundera to our own middle-class world. Our lives, we are told, are empty and meaningless, we have been dehumanized by false gods. The American writers who believe this wearily strain to convey their "radical" message with the experimental tricks of exhausted modernism, in order to assert that they are the cultural avant-garde. Yet how feeble their gestures seem alongside the writers who are driven to take genuine literary risks out of the necessity of expressing a reality that is literally, physically dehumanizing.

If there is an avant-garde today, it is to be found not in the technical acrobatics of Western writers, but among the dissident novelists and poets of Communist Europe. The freshness and strength of their innovations come not from their political dissent but from the fact that, having experienced the actuality of concentration camps, prison, and exile, they are driven by the need to find a new voice for old horrors.

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Books in Review

The Saudis and Us

ARABIA, THE GULF, AND THE WEST. By J. B. KELLY. *Basic Books. 530 pp. $25.00.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH SHATTAN

THE recent outbreak of fighting between Iran and Iraq, and the manifest inability of the United States to influence events in that region, have led nearly everyone who thinks about these matters to conclude that American policy in the Persian Gulf is gravely deficient. But while dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs is rife, no new consensus on an alternative policy has crystallized, for the simple reason that the conceptual underpinnings of the old policy are not adequately understood. The timely publication of J. B. Kelly's magisterial study therefore constitutes a major intellectual event. At once an analysis of the politics, history, and culture of the Gulf states and a trenchant examination of Western policy toward these states from 1967 to 1979, Kelly's book is an indispensable guide to anyone concerned with the evolution of American policy in the Middle East.

Since the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Kelly reminds us, the oil-producing states of the Persian Gulf have raised the price of oil to exorbitant heights, have played havoc with the world's economy, have engaged in open political blackmail, and have subjected several Western nations to an oil embargo. Until rather recently, however, the American public was repeatedly assured by a parade of government officials, academics, and businessmen that the Gulf oil producers entertained nothing but feelings of friendship and solicitude for the United States, that a natural harmony of interests obtained between the Western democracies and Islam, that the guardianship of the Gulf's resources might be safely entrusted to those twin pillars of stability and pro-Western sentiment, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and that the West's best hope for coping with OPEC's price increases consisted in relying upon the good will and enlightened self-interest of the Arab "moderates." With the fall of the Shah, this roseate picture was somewhat altered: where once it was said that the West could rely on two pillars to protect its vital interests, now it would have to rest content with one. In all of its essentials, however, the doctrine of Western-Islamic harmony has continued to guide American policy-makers.

According to Kelly, this doctrine —upon which the entire edifice of American diplomacy rests—is profoundly misleading. Far from being kindly disposed toward the West, the Gulf states have long nourished an "enduring and deep-seated resentment" against it, and regard the situation created by the OPEC cartel as a providential opportunity to establish the primacy of Islam in the world and humiliate Christendom. "Stripped of their specious justifications about past Western exploitation and the intolerable affront to Arab susceptibilities afforded by the existence of Israel," Kelly argues, "the actions of the Arabs and Persians before, during, and since 1973, if placed in their historical, religious, racial, and cultural setting, amount to nothing less than a bold attempt to lay the Christian West under tribute to the Muslim East."

Kelly paints an especially unflattering portrait of Saudi Arabia, a theocracy whose ruling dynasty, the house of Saud, has long been identified with the puritanical, revivalist Islamic movement known as Wahhabism. It is one of the principal tenets of this movement that its followers should engage in constant aggression and expansion at the expense of non-believers, and it was this policy, zealously pursued by the house of Saud, which accounts both for Saudi Arabia's dominant position on the Arab side of the Gulf today, and for the fear which Saudi power inspires among the smaller Gulf principalities. In its relations with the West, Kelly points out, the Wahhabi state has been guided by the same principles of expansion and aggrandizement which have served it in the past.

THAT Saudi Arabia's rulers have felt free to challenge the West, despite the backwardness and military inferiority of their kingdom, is due in no small measure to their experience with the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco), which placed itself at Saudi Arabia's disposal after it secured an oil concession there in 1933. Toward the Saudi government, Kelly notes, Aramco pursued "a policy of complacent liberality, of concession in preference to bargaining, in the face of successive and various government demands." These demands, whether for greater revenues, an increasing share of Aramco's assets, or an embargo on oil supplies to the U.S. navy in 1973, were faithfully and dutifully complied with by the oil company, leading Saudi rulers to infer that the West in general, and the United States in particular, would prove no less yielding and gullible when faced with similar demands.

In addition to shaping Saudi Arabia's perception of the West, Aramco has also been instrumental in shaping American perceptions of Saudi Arabia. As the only source of readily available information about that country, it easily established itself for a long time as the acknowledged authority on Gulf affairs. Unfortunately, Aramco's peculiar rendering of Saudi history owed more to Scheherazade than to Clio. Carefully omitting any mention of the fanatical nature of Wahhabism from their accounts, historians at Aramco's Arabian research division in Dhahran, from the 1940's onward, portrayed Saudi society as basically democratic and egalitarian, and the Saudi ruling house as imbued with a natural sense of kinship and affinity with the great American democracy across the seas. "The irony implicit in this inventive attempt to create the fiction of a community of outlook and a spon-

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taneous camaraderie between the citizens of the world's most advanced democracy and the subjects of one of its most unenlightened despotisms," Kelly remarks, "never seemed to dawn upon the industrious fabulists of Dhahran."

Neither, evidently, did it dawn upon the industrious Arabophiles of the State Department, who accepted the Aramco fantasy of Saudi-American amity at face value, and were quick to attribute any departure from their idyllic vision of Saudi-American relations to the unfortunate American connection with Israel. Often working in tandem, moreover, State Department officials and Aramco representatives set out to convert other influential Americans to their point of view.

A revealing example of this joint effort emerged during Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings held in June 1974. It appears that in January 1973, the director of the State Department's Office of Fuels and Energy, James Akins (shortly to become U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia) invited Aramco's Washington lobbyist, Michael Ameen, to his home, in order to inform Ameen—confidentially, of course—that John Ehrlichman, the presidential assistant, might be visiting Saudi Arabia in April. According to the transcript of the hearings, "Akins wanted Ameen to tell Yamani it was very important that he, Yamani, . . . see to it that Ehrlichman was given the message we Saudis love you people but your American policy [toward Israel] is hurting us."

Given their view of Saudi-American relations, it is hardly surprising that State Department officials responded to OPEC's price increases by urging further concessions from Israel. The Saudis, they claimed, shared a common interest with the U.S. in checking the spread of Communism. Therefore, they could be relied upon to use their considerable influence to moderate OPEC price increases, inasmuch as these increases only served to weaken the West's position relative to the Soviets. But for the Saudis to do this, argued the State Department, the U.S. would first have to demonstrate greater appreciation for Saudi Arabia's position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, the proper American response to OPEC's rapacity was to engage in a confrontation with Jerusalem, not with Riyadh or Teheran.

Far from encouraging the Saudis to tread the path of moderation, however, this policy, says Kelly, merely confirmed the Gulf states in their contempt for the U.S., and encouraged them to raise oil prices even further. Interestingly enough, the most spectacular price increases in the history of the oil industry occurred between December 1978 and December 1979, the period which commenced with the overthrow of the Shah and ended with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That the Muslim states chose precisely this time of Western weakness and disarray to put into effect such drastic price increases is perhaps a more reliable indication of their true feelings toward the West —and the validity of Kelly's thesis— than the hollow assurances of Aramco lobbyists and State Department Arabists.

As Kelly compellingly argues, to have regarded the Saudis and Iranians as essentially benign powers, whose hostility to Communism and admiration for Western technology would necessarily lead them to engage in moderate and reasonable behavior toward the West, was "to make the cardinal error . . . of attributing Western modes of thought to Eastern minds." Yet this is precisely what American policy-makers did. Having convinced themselves that Muslim and American interests ran along parallel lines, they poured the most sophisticated weaponry into the Persian Gulf, certain that these weapons would never be turned against the West. Having proved to their own satisfaction that the prosperity of the Gulf sheikhdoms ultimately depended on the continued growth of the American economy, they blithely permitted the sheikhs to accumulate a fantastic surplus of American dollars which they were confident would not be used to threaten our economic viability. And having assured themselves that Iran and Saudi Arabia were responsible, pro-Western military powers, they saw no need—until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—to establish an effective American military presence in the region.

Thus it came about that when the Iraqi-Iranian war broke out, the U.S. found itself not only without diplomatic or military leverage, but also without a strategic stockpile of oil to draw upon in case the conflict should escalate. The Saudis, it seems, had vetoed the possibility of the U.S. building up its petroleum reserves during discussions with Energy Secretary Duncan earlier this year.

WHILE Kelly's study is largely concerned with past policies, and does not address itself directly to the current situation, its bearing on recent events is obvious. To devise an effective role for ourselves in the Persian Gulf, we must first of all change the way we think about that region. More specifically, we must replace the Aramco-inspired reading of Gulf history with an interpretation more in keeping with reality. Once American officials learn to distinguish between friend and foe, the other pieces of the Persian Gulf puzzle will tend to fall into place automatically; until they learn to do so, however, our chances of digging our way out of the wreckage of current policy are exceedingly dim.

Jews and Their Enemies

FROM PREJUDICE TO DESTRUCTION: ANTI-SEMITISM 1700-1933. By JACOB KATZ. *Harvard University Press. 392 pp. $20.00.*

Reviewed by GEORGE L. MOSSE

JACOB KATZ's new book enables us to discern the history of anti-Semitism with greater clarity than ever before, as he guides us through a bewildering maze of books and pamphlets reflecting every current of European thought. Beginning with a summary of medieval anti-Semitism, he devotes the greater part of the book to the period of Emancipation during the 18th and 19th centuries, years of progress which nevertheless witnessed a constant stream of literature den-

GEORGE L. MOSSE *teaches history at the University of Wisconsin and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is the author of, most recently,* Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality *(Howard Fertig).*

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igrating the Jews. The balance of the book deals with the anti-Semitic movements which started in the last decades of the 19th century, followed by a very brief summary of their consequences after World War I.

Mr. Katz does not encompass all of Europe in his analysis, but concentrates on Germany, Austria, and Hungary, with a few chapters devoted to France. The chapters are concise and the scholarship never tiring, for it is centered upon a point of view, a thesis about the nature of anti-Semitism which does not permit us to wander off into irrelevancies or to drown in the vast learning so modestly displayed.

The workings of history itself become one explanation for the persistence of anti-Semitism, through the sheer weight of anti-Semitic literature across the years. Mr. Katz illustrates a process of accumulation which manages to generate its own momentum. To the cumulative effect of literature he adds the cumulative effect of repeated disappointment on the part of non-Jews at the persistence of Jewish cohesion and solidarity, a disappointment that eventually spilled over into dynamic anti-Semitic movements. Such movements, to be sure, at least in Germany, were sparked by economic crisis and social unrest, but in Mr. Katz's analysis historical reality, while not ignored, is placed in the context of ideas and thought.

One major idea is the image of the Jew inherited from Christianity. Modern anti-Semitism, Mr. Katz tells us, consists of an essentially archaic image covered by layers of contemporary justification. The supposed inferiority of Judaism to Christianity, one of the chief themes of the book, is traced by him through practically all thinkers, both religious and secular. In their writings, any distinction between ancient and modern Jews is blurred and confused; the masses of contemporary Jewry fall under a blanket condemnation. Even Renan and Hegel, for whom some Jews were pioneers of enlightenment, and for whom the Jewish masses were no worse than the Christian masses, are said by Mr. Katz to have collapsed the essential distinctions. And there is justification for this assertion, since Christianity continued to provide much of the universal discourse of the times in which they wrote.

As for the secularizing movements, which had little use for the traditional hierarchy of Christian revelation, they developed their own anti-Semitic momentum. Nationalism, for example, which hardly enters Mr. Katz's discussion, twisted Christian religiosity to its own autonomous purpose. Judaism was not only a lesser revelation than Christianity, but Jews could never share the nation's history, its myths and symbols. Much of the longing for democracy and social justice during the 19th century was displaced onto a love of nation, leading to a populism which proved hostile to Jews. In this connection it might have been more illuminating to place a radical like Edouard Drumont in a populist context than to explain his attitude

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toward the Jews through his perceptions of Christianity.

Mr. Katz's emphasis on Germany may unduly obscure another element of the story. The attempts to defeat finance capitalism and to make the nation into a unified community were called national-socialist long before Hitler annexed that term, and France, through the persistence of the Jacobin tradition, was the home of this national socialism. Similarly, for a period of time France was more vulnerable than Germany to political anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism as a mass movement first arose in Dreyfusard France, a fact which would seem to be of greater importance than the appearance at about the same time of the ineffective German anti-Semitic parties that are discussed here. It was not until World War I and its aftermath that Germany became the country destined to transform theory into national practice.

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The story of the penetration of anti-Semitism into society is also part of the history of popular culture. In addition to those who, however prejudiced and ill-informed, believed themselves to be educated men, forming their opinions about Jews on the basis of reading and reflection, we must know about those who could grasp ideas only through the intervention of symbols —especially pictures, photographs, and film, the major forms of communication in an ever more visual age. Here Mr. Katz's stress on Christianity may be justified through the continuity not so much of religious thought as of religious imagery. It is arguable in this connection that Wagner's operas deserve more attention than his prose, though Mr. Katz skillfully uses Wagner's writings to illustrate the nature of possible attacks on assimilated Jewish intellectuals.

THE relative neglect of racism is perhaps more serious. Mr. Katz believes that racism was at first a neutral term without any disparaging connotations. In fact, however, racism was never a neutral term; *someone* had to be put on the lowest rung of the ladder. The entire project of racial classification was necessarily and indeed overtly prejudicial, in the first instance against blacks and then against Jews, who shared a near-identity of racial stereotype with blacks.

Though many of the sources of racism and anti-Semitism differ, they connect not only in the theories of the late 19th century but also before that, in the Enlightenment. This book has an illuminating chapter on Voltaire which shows how the age of reason encouraged the persistence of the Jewish stereotype. The rationalist reorientation, as Mr. Katz calls it, condemned Judaism as the foundation of Christianity and demanded that Jews, like Christians, shed their religion.

But this is only part of the story. The depersonalization inherent in much Enlightenment thought, along with its passion for administering peoples and governments, served to lock Jews into the place assigned to them by the political and scientific theories of the age, leaving no room for their own traditions. The drive to define people

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and animals by their so-called scientific classifications was accompanied by judgments of value to which Jews had to conform if they were not to be relegated to lower rungs on the ladder of civilization. Thus, side by side with all the other excuses for disliking Jews, racism lay in wait for the moment to strike.

THESE remarks of mine are an attempt to extend Mr. Katz's analysis of anti-Semitism, not to detract from a task well done. To this book Mr. Katz has brought scholarly rigor, objectivity, and, last but not least, a sense of the passage of time so frequently missing from discussions of anti-Semitism. For once, the modern Jewish experience is not read backward from catastrophe, but is allowed to find its own way through all the continuities and discontinuities which history has to offer.

Investigative Columnist

SAFIRE'S WASHINGTON. By WILLIAM SAFIRE. *Times Books. 534 pp. $17.50.*

Reviewed by EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

IN 1973, William Safire left the White House staff, where he had been one of Richard Nixon's main speechwriters, and joined the New York *Times* as a regular columnist. A few months after he had made this transition, the publisher of the *Times*, Arthur O. Sulzberger, received an irate letter from David Halberstam, a former *Times* reporter, who was then writing a book about the media. Halberstam imperiously advised Sulzberger to kill Safire's column. "It's a lousy column and it's a dishonest one. So close it. Or you will end up just as shabby as Safire," wrote Halberstam.

This attempt to eliminate a point of view in the press was ironic coming from Halberstam—who as the *Times* man in Vietnam had himself been the object of a similar effort by President John F. Kennedy—and met with no success. Sulzberger coldly replied that while he did not always agree with Safire, he remained "confident that over the years he will be an important contributor to the New York *Times*."

As it turned out, Safire won a Pulitzer Prize, and became one of the most powerful and important journalists in America. His investigations into the Carter administration contributed, perhaps more than the work of any other journalist, to changing the public perception of the Carter Presidency from one of homey honesty to one of red-neck corruption. Indeed, he has presented more scoops in his column than one finds on the front page of any other newspaper.

Safire did not, however, begin as an investigative journalist. His earliest columns for the *Times* were mainly devoted to arguing that the press was applying a much different criterion of judgment to the Nixon

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN, *who is currently completing a book on the international diamond business, is the author of two books on journalism,* News from Nowhere *and* Between Fact and Fiction.

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administration from the one it had applied to the earlier Kennedy-Johnson administrations. The flaw in the logic of this "double-standard" charge was the assumption that journalism is some form of judicial process. Of course it is not. Unlike the judicial process, which is rooted in the historic evaluation of cases in terms of their proximate precedents, journalism exists almost entirely in the present. It is criticism of the moment at the moment. It requires no elaborate institutional memory to fit events into historic context. Fairness is considered to be reporting all sides of a controversial issue, not bringing in past analogies. Safire's double standard, though intellectually provocative, proved therefore irrelevant as a criticism of journalistic practice, and ineffective as a defense of the Nixon administration.

As his column developed, however, Safire showed himself to be a rapid learner of the art of journalism. Unlike most other columnists of the mid-70's, who focused their passions on conventional causes like the Vietnam war, Safire found for himself an entirely original cause: *Sarbasti*, which, as his readers soon learned, means freedom in Kurdish. In a series of essays with such titles as "Of Kurds and Conscience," "The Kurdish Question," and "Mr. Ford's Secret Sellout," Safire charged that the Kurdish people, who had been seeking self-determination in the mountains of Iraq, had been brutally betrayed by President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger. In a batch of CIA documents, Safire found that the United States had terminated clandestine arms shipments to the Kurds in 1975. The support had originally been given to the Kurds at the request of the Shah of Iran, who wanted to harass neighboring Iraq; it ended when the Shah settled his outstanding differences with Iraq. Safire argued that this had represented a betrayal of the freedom-loving Kurdish people, and he attacked Kissinger as "insensitive" for having said by way of explanation that "covert action should not be confused with missionary work."

Yet harsh as this made Kissinger sound, he was right. The Kurds were demanding freedom not only in Iraq but in Turkey and Iran. If the United States had supported such a claim with guns, it would have undercut both these allies (and, in 1975, Turkey and Iran were both important allies of the United States). Still, whatever the merits of the Kurdish cause, Safire managed to ferret out enough secret material on the issue to embarrass severely both Kissinger and Ford.

Then, in 1977, he turned his investigative talents to a far more productive cause: demolishing the credibility of President Carter's closest adviser, Bert Lance. In his years in the White House, Safire had come to understand all the artful techniques of evasion used by press officers; and now he turned this insider's knowledge against the White House. Under acerbic titles like "Carter's Broken Lance," "Boiling the Lance," and "The Skunk at the Garden Party," Safire mercilessly exposed falsities, contradictions, and ironies in what became known as "the Lance affair." The relentless pressure helped keep the issue before the public eye, and was in no small measure responsible for Lance's forced resignation.

Through these mini-exposés, Safire has developed into one of the finest investigative reporters in the universe of daily journalism. In the later columns, he displays an uncanny eye for evidence of governmental cover-ups, especially in analyzing official statements. Moreover, unlike many of his peers, he shows a real understanding of the limits—and vulnerabilities—of the power of the White House. It was therefore not surprising to find him unraveling the scandal concerning the President's brother, Billy Carter, and the Libyan government. In general, his columns provide a fascinating catalogue of the legerdemain, weasel words, and tricks-of-the-trade used by politicians to hide, confuse, and divert attention from embarrassing happenings.

THE politics of Safire appear to be a cross between Republican pragmatism and journalistic libertarianism. With few exceptions, the targets of his attack tend to be liberal Democrats, such as Senator Kennedy, or key members of Democratic administrations, present and past. The defining political assumption underlying his column is that almost all governmental activities flow out of partisan motivations. The first casualty in this partisan tug of war is the judicial system. For example, in explaining the failure of the Justice Department under President Carter to investigate fully Korean bribes to Democrats in Congress, Safire writes: "One reason was that Democratic investigations of Democrats are not as zest-filled as Democratic investigations of Republicans." In the world according to Safire, justice is unequally distributed, and party affiliation is a key determinant of who benefits. He describes the Justice Department in fact as a "Democratic plum tree."

Even though Safire's schema hardly provides an explanation for everything in the judicial process—Democratic Congressmen were entrapped and prosecuted by a Democratic Justice Department in the Abscam case—it has given him a string of scathing insights into Justice Department machinations in the cases of Bert Lance and Billy Carter.

On social issues such as abortion, pornography, and political protests, Safire adopts a surprisingly liberal stance: liberal, at least, in the sense of John Stuart Mill. He generally argues that there is a private sphere of personal conscience, which does not directly impinge on society, and into which the state should not gratuitously intervene. Moreover, like most other journalists, he vehemently defends all the privileges journalists have assumed in recent years—thus demonstrating, perhaps, that the desire to protect one's own is not confined to politicians or government alone.

Staffing Congress

UNELECTED REPRESENTATIVES. By MICHAEL J. MALBIN. *Basic Books. 279 pp. $15.95.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

IN 1981, the third Senate office building will open, expanding Senate office space by 50 percent. Since the number of Senators has re-

ELLIOTT ABRAMS, *who writes frequently on issues of public policy, worked in the United States Senate for five years.*

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mained fixed, the new building is a monument to the growth of staff. It is a commonplace on Capitol Hill to note that the new building will be overcrowded the day it opens, and that the parking lots adjacent to it will soon, in their turn, be the sites of mammoth office buildings to house yet more staff.

This growth of congressional staff is the subject of a new book by Michael Malbin, one of the most intelligent reporters in Washington. The book is organized as a series of case studies, with chapters on the most activist and politicized staffs, on the nonpartisan staff of the Joint Tax Committee, and on the staffs of particular committees or on particular bills. Some readers will no doubt find the detail excessive, but it is essential for drawing an accurate portrait.

Simply put, the issue is how the explosive growth of staff affects the functioning of the Congress. The numbers are staggering: Malbin's data show that since 1950, committee staffs have grown from 300 to 1,100, and personal staffs of Senators and Congressmen from 600 to 3,600. Meanwhile, thousands more toil away in the new Congressional Budget Office and Office of Technology Assessment, and at the Library of Congress's enlarged Congressional Research Service and in the General Accounting Office. By Malbin's count, over 20,000 people now do staff work for Congress.

This is a new phenomenon, for until World War II elected representatives did their own work. Members and committees employed "clerks" who were in fact typists or file clerks with little or no influence on congressional activities. A few committees, such as the Joint Tax Committee and the appropriations committees, employed professionals who were career civil servants in all but legal status.

In part, the growth of staff results from, and at the same time reinforces, the dispersal of power in the House and Senate; younger members now have the bureaucratic support to exert influence to an unprecedented degree. And the *role* of staff has changed even more than the size. As Malbin notes, staff people now tend to be young lawyers or policy analysts to whom a job on the Hill is a career stepping-stone. Half of Congress's staff has been on the job for four years or less. Far from providing only technical expertise or clerical assistance—although many do provide these—the new staffers initiate ideas, conduct oversight activities, and negotiate with other staffs and members of Congress, with personnel of the executive agencies, and with the interest groups that swarm near the Congress as bees surround a honey pot.

MALBIN is very clear in describing the benefits of all this: staff "clearly helps Congress maintain its position as a coequal branch of government," and "has helped Congress retain its position as a key initiator of federal policy, despite the growing power of the executive branch. . . . The system . . . seems to be responsible for much of the oversight that gets accomplished outside of the General Accounting Office." Staff members are Congress's soldiers in the battle against interest groups and the executive branch for control of the federal government. Without staff, the scope and complexity of federal activities would simply overwhelm the individual Congressman or Senator.

But the costs of this service are high, both for the individual members and for Congress as an institution. First, Malbin notes that Congress's enormous staff ends up creating work rather than simply handling it. To keep busy, to keep interested, to be powerful, staffs develop bills, arrange hearings, set up meetings, and above all generate paper. "In other words," Malbin writes, "instead of freeing the members to concentrate, the staffs contribute to the frenetic pace of congressional life." Staffs become "a mechanism for generating more work for Congress instead of helping it manage the existing workload."

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vention by government. As Malbin notes, members of Congress want "new ideas." "In practice . . . this means the staff should discover 'problems' amenable to legislative fixes. If no 'problem' can be found, a 'crisis' might do. . . ." So the flow of activity increases, with the result that more and more power devolves upon the staffs. As staffs now initiate new ideas, and largely determine which to follow up, "Congress . . . has given up much of its control over the agenda to the staff." Malbin poses the central issue: "If the members are so overburdened that they need professional staffs not only to point out but to choose among alternative assumptions, we may well ask whether something crucial to democratic government is being lost in the process."

This is Malbin's major concern. In his chapter on the debate over deregulation of natural gas in 1977-78, the real subject is why Congress failed so dismally to provide any leadership to the country on energy. That failure, Malbin says, stemmed in large part not from characteristics of the energy issue itself but from those of Congress and its staff. So overwhelmed with data was Congress, so bedeviled by rival sets of numbers, that the key policy choices were hardly understood or addressed. By contrast, an earlier debate over natural-gas deregulation in 1955-56 was less "well-informed" but carefully and competently addressed such issues as the legality and desirability of price regulation and the extent of oligopoly in the industry. As the Congress's "technical" competence expands, its actual ability to deal with issues declines, and so too does its "crucial representative role" in speaking for the needs and interests of constituents.

In one of the book's most valuable insights, Malbin points out that while Congressmen now represent their constituencies less effectively on many major issues, their staffs have been filling the gap by representing new interest groups whose most salient characteristic is their *lack* of a constituency. Staff members covering a given area or subject belong to an "issue network" of congressional, executive-branch, academic, and interest-group personnel whose professional lives revolve around that area or subject. In a few years, upon leaving the Hill, the staff member will probably join an executive agency or a law firm where he will continue to deal with the same people. This situation is fraught with problems for Congress, even if one assumes no venality, or excessive ambition, on anyone's part.

THUS Malbin draws the picture of a Congress successful only at battling for congressional power, and unsuccessful at coping with key problems of national policy or at performing its true task: representing the constituencies which elected it.

Malbin is pessimistic about reducing the size of staff, for two reasons: staff size has meant greater influence for younger members of Congress, who will not wish to relinquish it; and staff size grows as the size and activities of the executive branch grow. As Malbin notes, "About the only way to reduce Congress's workload without vastly increasing the discretionary power of the less representative branches of government would seem to be to reduce the size and complexity of government as a whole."

This study of Congress and its staff is, then, in a sense a study of a government grown too large. Here the cost is democratic control, and precisely in that branch of government whose task in our political system is democratic representation.

Yet it may be that Malbin is too pessimistic about change; there is obviously a growing feeling in the country that government does too much and does it poorly, and should reduce its sway The present moment may one day be seen as one in which government power reached its peak and began to decline. In any event, the debate over the size and role of government is now rightly a key issue in American politics. To this debate, *Unelected Representatives* makes a distinct contribution.

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Autocrat of Old Russia

PETER THE GREAT: HIS LIFE AND WORK. By ROBERT MASSIE. *Knopf. 909 pp. $17.95.*

Reviewed by LEV NAVROZOV

ROBERT MASSIE, a historian educated at Yale and Oxford, belongs to the endangered, if not extinct, species of the gentleman scholar. Unaffiliated with any university, he lives and writes outside today's habitat of multiplying doctorates, grants, computers, and prolific paperwork that are assumed to be scholarship by fiat. Yet his *Nicholas and Alexandra,* a study of the last czar of Russia and his time, researched for many years and written at a leisurely pace, is more authentic than any other work on the subject I know of.

Neither *Nicholas and Alexandra* nor the present 909-page effort, *Peter the Great,* into which Massie has put twelve years of his life, makes any concession to what

LEV NAVROZOV, *who left Russia in 1972, is the author of* The Education of Lev Navrozov. *He is currently finishing a book about the New York* Times.

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"sells" books nowadays. Massie is as archaic in this respect as Herodotus, and offers no more room to psychohistory or novelistic sex than did Gibbons or Macaulay. Yet *Nicholas and Alexandra* was a commercial success, or rather triumph. Fortunately, Massie knows how to *narrate* history, the knack of a gentleman scholar who survives in the narrowing niche between academic sterility and commercial vulgarity.

As MASSIE notes in the concluding pages of the present book, Peter the Great has been at the center of political controversy in Russia ever since his reign (1682-1725). By the close of the 18th century, he had been all but deified, and the cult continued until the 1830's when the Slavophiles began to clamor that Peter had destroyed the "self-being" (one would say today, the cultural identity) of Russia by "aping" the West. In the mid-19th century an even stronger opposition began to grow among the Westernizers who contended that Peter had done nothing to transfer to Russia the Western heritage of freedom; his efforts at Westernization, it was said, had been purely military and bureaucratic in character.

By the end of the century the cult of Peter was over, but he was not allowed to rest in peace. One of Lenin's top men, Pokrovsky, every bit as intolerant and ruthless as Lenin or Bukharin but also a truly outstanding historian of Russia, wrote a cogent, well-documented, and devastating exposé of the alleged achievements of Peter. Published at the beginning of the century, it was later hailed by the official Soviet historical establishment as an annihilating blow at the Russian monarchy in general and another brilliant Marxist demonstration that history is moved by classes, not individuals.

When, however, Stalin decided to pose as a new Peter, Marxism notwithstanding, the quietly removed Pokrovsky was soon forgotten and the 18th-century cult of Peter was resurrected with a vengeance, except that now it was claimed that he had insured Russia's progress, initiated the defeat of the West, and put Russia on the road to global naval power. The story now was that Peter had been succeeded by a series of reactionary weaklings (like Alexander II with his civic reforms), the last of whom had to be overthrown in order to pass the Russia of Peter on to Stalin, his true successor.

Ironically, Stalin's approach to Peter has been echoed in a way by some American Sovietologists and recent emigrés from Russia who argue that the post-1917 regime continues the expansionist tendencies of the Russian empire.

MASSIE'S *Peter the Great* is not concerned with any of these controversies, but all sides to them may benefit from its rich, balanced, factual presentation.

What was the West like at the end of the 17th century, when Peter went there incognito as part of his two-year Grand Embassy? Massie devotes to Western coun-

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tries and their rulers at least as much space as he does to Russia and Peter. We learn from his exposition that Peter could not have transferred the "Western heritage of freedom" to Russia if only because the West as a whole hardly knew what that heritage was. The most Western, civilized, "advanced" country of the time was probably France, and when Peter came to "explain" the West to his son, his one and only example was the late Louis XIV of France, who "loved war" and "also loved mechanics, manufactures, and other establishments."

Now, to Russians the French adulation of the Sun King went to lengths which seemed ridiculously servile. And in other respects as well the contrast between the two countries does not line up along a convenient axis of West versus East, of civilization versus backwardness. The palace of Kolomenskoye, built by Peter's father, "had baths not only for members of the royal family, but also for the servants"—while the palace of Versailles, built about the same time, was "without either baths or toilets." In 1717 human waste matter was still dumped from the windows in Paris.

Not that the late 17th and early 18th centuries rise from Massie's pages as a single realm of unrelieved savagery. Rather, what we perceive is the infinitely complex and paradoxical variety of life in any country at that time. In Istanbul, "wild roses bloomed and nightingales sang in the hedgerows"; and from Reval, Peter's wife wrote to him about their son, "with God's help he is quite well and has cut three back teeth." Similarly, the "villains" of Massie's story, with their wives, mistresses, children, and subordinates, often display an impetuous big-heartedness, a generous compassion, or a disinterested loyalty and affection that many a modern might envy. History, no matter how scrupulously factual, is an art, and "art is a sense of balance," as Chekhov said. It is a fine sense of balance that makes Massie's description of the fatal strife between Peter and his son Alexis, or between Peter and Charles XII of Sweden, intensely alive, human, and real.

At the same time, Massie's rich mosaic of the contemporary world puts Russia into proper perspective. As he describes the executions of the Streltsy (Peter's mutinous soldiers), Massie reminds us of similar executions in England, facts that are well known yet often overlooked by American students of Russia. Nor was barbaric retribution in England (and elsewhere) confined to political crimes:

> Witches were burned in England during Peter's lifetime and still were being hanged a century later. In 1692, six years before the Streltsy revolt, twenty men and women and two dogs were hanged for witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts. Through most of the 18th century, Englishmen were executed for stealing five shillings, and women were hanged for stealing a handkerchief. In the Royal Navy, infractions of discipline were commonly punished with a cat-o'-nine-tails. These floggings, which often resulted in death, were not abolished until 1881.

For anyone to decipher behind all this the "Western heritage of freedom," and be able to make use of it, would have taken a combination of John Milton, Montesquieu, and Pericles, none of whom Peter was. He had the concrete practical mind of an engineer or administrator. He was not born to pioneer or even to conceptualize a new type of society—the "West" as we perceive it today. In this sense his reign is irrelevant to the present.

Of course, Peter was an aggressor, an invader, an expansionist. But so was every powerful autocrat of Europe, such as Charles XII of Sweden, who was engaged in war from early infancy to death on the battlefield. It is meaningless to ask whether military actions were defensive or aggressive; defense and attack were strategic concepts, not moral ones. Charles XII invaded Russia in order to dethrone Peter; when Peter routed him at Poltava, he seated Charles's captured generals and colonels with himself at a festive dinner, expressed his regret that "my brother Charles" had escaped and so could not share their company, toasted the Swedes as his teachers in the art of war, and offered the captured officers posts of the same rank in *his* army. When Charles, making yet another war on Peter, was killed in action, Peter's eyes "filled with tears" upon hearing the news; "wiping them away, he said, 'my dear Charles, how much I pity you' and ordered the Russian court into mourning for a week." Anyone tempted to project the absolutism of Peter onto the post-1917 Russian regime should recall for comparison the attitude of Stalin toward *his* military (and other) antagonists and their aides.

Under absolutism, the relations between autocrats and their subjects were to some extent mitigated on both sides by religious taboos. Like other autocrats of his time, Peter "walked freely among his people." When, in 1705, rebels in Astrakhan renounced the czar's authority and beheaded his governor, Peter invited them to send deputies to Moscow to present their grievances. These were found to be just, it was promised that henceforth taxes would be collected more discreetly, and the "deputies returned to Astrakhan, each man with fifty roubles in his pocket for expenses, and with a promise that if the city would submit, every citizen should have amnesty."

On the last page of his book Massie cites a document in which Peter explains that he is not a tyrant. In the framework of the time, he was not. It is totalitarian rulers like Stalin and Pol Pot who would have struck him, or any other autocrat of his time, as barbarous tyrants.

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